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The Lay Of The Land

A Collection Of Short Stories (1916)

Virginia Quitman McNealus

THE LAY OF THE LAND

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

BY

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To The Memory of
HELEN
"Eternal in Eternity"

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AN OLD COAST IDYL

THE LAY OF THE LAND

AN OLD COAST IDYL

He was a mild old man, yet a good deal of fire still lingered in his black eyes, with the snowy thatch above. He wore the blue blouse of his people, and the only thing that indicated the seafaring man was the brass hoops in his withered old ears. It was only when he began to talk that we got a whiff of the salt sea; not the sea where the gales blow big guns and tear all sentiment out of the heart of the storm, but the sapphire waters of his own southern Gulf, where the breezes bring with them the rustle of palms and the glint of sunshine on waves which rock as to a cradle song.

It was long ago; we can remember him as he sat in the pleasant sunshine watching the end of his pole and patiently awaiting the fish that always came to his hook. Like most of his people, he knew how to grow old without a consciousness of age, his strength a calm philosophy which left his conscience to his priest and his well-being to the gentle consideration of a friendly climate.

Colette's reminiscences, and his quiet, indo-

lent old age were, however, somewhat paradoxical. He often spoke of the time when he was in "the contraband," and of his valiant services to the American cause on the plains of Chalmette, a tale that grew in interest after we had learned that he had been one of Lafitte's crew. He would point out—with a sly twinkle in his bright old eye—the places where Spanish gold was buried, or cargoes of Sicilian and Portuguese wines. The localities indicated were always at some distance, and almost inaccessible through the quivering marsh grass in the intricacies of the Louisiana swamps, an isolation which hung like a curtain of indigenous vines over the traditional mysteries of early Arcadia.

Colette's voice was low and soft; he spoke a musical patois accompanied by a smile that was wholly incompatible with the impression he was ever endeavoring to create; an impression which would have caused the hair to rise upon our young heads, and the most valiant heart among us to quail, had not love been stronger than fear. The lonely live oaks beneath which treasure was buried; the tales of fights with revenue officers and dark hints of prisoners who were made to "walk the plank," fell from his lips in a lazy drone, as he slowly brushed a mosquito from his prominent nose and drew up the ends of his fierce mustache.

There was one reminiscence of Colette's to which we were never tired of listening, as we

sat upon the soft earth beneath the low-hanging live oak boughs by the still waters of the Grand Caillou. This story of Benvenuto's wedding was an Arcadian idyl, and at every repetition it seemed to gather around it more of the sunshine of our Southern coast, and more of the poetry and romance of old France.

How much Colette enjoyed the telling, and how many times he said "Ah!" as his great mustache went up to meet the ripple in his wicked old eye, it would be hard to say. To him, each repetition was like the fresh breath of some hidden flower which he kept carefully tended within the walled garden of his heart. When we became learned enough to translate the tale into plain English, and knew more of the wonder of Arcadian romance, we were not astonished to find that Benvenuto was handsome, as became a child of the sun; that his skin had been tanned by the softest of Gulf breezes, or that his black eyes had sparkled with the laughter of a joy-filled heart. The story was so environed with the romance of locality, that we did not wonder to hear of Benvenuto's prowess, although we knew that he differed not from the men of his race, who, literally, if unconsciously, followed the Scriptural injunction to take no thought of the morrow. To comply with the exactions of labor in that province of old Arcadie, one had only to caress the Earth with a sweet-natured indo-

lence, that she may bring forth her increase of rice and sugar-cane, or to lie beneath the live oak or cypress, and watch the cork go under many times before the inspiration came that would draw in the fish a most benign Providence sent to the hook. All of this we knew, still, we admired Benvenuto, yet—how many years before our time had the great storm taken him forever from the beach at Dernier Isle.

We also knew the small adobe church, with the plaster Virgin over its rickety little altar where the flowers bloomed perennially; the handful of genuine orange blossoms whose fragrance served to emphasize the tawdry meanness of their paper sisters. It was upon the cane chair in the far corner that Benvenuto's soft glance first fell, and then upon the steps of the altar where some one was kneeling, her red skirt giving the touch of color to the homely little place, while the sunbeam that crept through the palmetto roof illumined the braids of her black hair.

Marie was so devout, and she had not a latent perception that would inspire her with a belief that some one was looking in. Her hands were folded over a rosary of white pebbles, and her eyes were fixed upon the blue cornflowers in the small vase at the Master's feet.

When the time came for the ceremony of Benvenuto's marriage, there was a pause in

Colette's tale. At this point of the story the mosquitoes always got the better of the ancient mariner; they settled comfortably in a swarm upon his great nose—which, apparently, had been borrowed from one of the Old Guard—and sang unmolested around his hat.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "she is an old woman now, who catches crabs in a broken net, but she was young then; she was good and bore the Holy Mother's name." Here he would look around him with a smile and remark that all was unchanged except God's human creatures. So it was. The gentle current of the bayous had not taken one inch from the yielding land; the live oaks now so hoary, were old then, and the little church was much the same, only the palmetto roof had been made new and the flowers were placed by other hands.

Colette never failed to remember that the sun shone bright on Benvenuto's wedding day. He used to tell us how he went down the bayou in his little perogue with a silver chain in his pocket, an offering for the bride; how the girls came along the waterways in their perogues, handling the treacherous little boats with the skill of veterans and bringing with them each a bundle of festal garments. In the forest clearing about Marie's home, Colette—he was young Colette then—found the bridal party assembled, and the picture it presented made a striking contrast to every convention recog-

nized by the great world outside of Arcadia. Perhaps, however, it was in accord with an older civilization than ours; who can tell!

Seated beneath the wide-spreading branches of a live oak was a group of young men busily engaged in tossing up a Mexican dollar, a pastime that, when rightly understood, was not altogether a pleasure in idleness, but rather a species of primitive gambling. "Ah!" sighed Colette, "one does not see Mexican dollars now; those were the brave days of the contraband," and the mustaches went up slowly to meet the small ripple in his old eye.

We instinctively knew the kind of picture the bridegroom made, seated upon the isolated stump of a fallen cypress, his hat encircled by a wreath of swamp flowers, his hands idly straying over the keys of an accordion, while the sun—having a benign tendency, as was natural—caused him to smile upon Colette as he had smiled upon the white-robed priest who stood near.

The bride, upon whom had fallen the solemnity of the immediate ceremony, was still within the house where she performed a last maiden office, that of ironing her wedding gown with a bottle of hot water, after which became necessary the delicate operation of twirling around her slender brown fingers the multitudinous frills. This picture was further enhanced by the presence of a number of young girls, faith-

ful in their traditions to the great-grandmothers who dwelt in the little village of Grand-Pré, "on the shores of the Basin of Minas." Beneath the low-hanging boughs of the great moss-draped live oak they formed a circle around two of their companions. One of the maidens thus shielded held a mirror, by the aid of which the other adorned herself. This performance was repeated until the entire circle was in festal array. Thus the first daughters of Eve might have formed the first circle for woman's co-operation. Such, however, was Arcadia when Colette was young.

Our ancient mariner always sighed when he gave us the priest's benediction over the head of the kneeling Marie. When, after many repetitions of this, our favorite tale, we took courage to ask Colette why he, himself, had never married, there was a sudden movement which awakened a swarm of mosquitoes that had gone to sleep upon the crown of his hat and upon the precipitous sides of his great nose, and having given his fishing pole an astonishing jerk, he replied: "It was because Benvenuto was the first to look in at the church."

The mustaches did not go up this time, because there were no ripples to be met.

A VINDICATION OF HOME RULE

A VINDICATION OF HOME RULE

Turbaned autocracy enthroned on a mackerel keg—in one hand a blue ribbon, in the other three dollars in prize money from the treasury of the State Fair, and on her face an expression of profound contempt—may appear an absurd figure to the present generation, but to you who saw life before the battle of Gettysburg, this absolute individual is well-known, and is also the place that she held in that other estate.

This especial exponent of that old régime differed not from her class, in as much as she was a success by the grace of God alone, and not from any hard-earned acquirements, as she was also as opposed to every social and economic reform as was the court of Louis XV.

"Ise bin carrin' thum smokehus keys fur nigh on ter fifty year; dun cooked a heap of we all's big dinners afoah der war, when comp'ny ware comp'ny sho nuff, and had mo' ter do wid Miss Betty's weddin' supper than all der t'other niggers put tergether, and hyar I got ter have ole Mis's gran'chillun cum and tell me how ter cook. Cum hyar, Isrul! Yer sho is der onconscionablest nigger! why don't yer

git that water?'' and Aunt Letty's outraged authority relieved itself upon the devoted head of her factotum and grandchild.

"I kinder s'picioned sumpin when I hyared 'bout thum cookin' schools, but I never mistrusted that all sich would stay 'way frum this hyar kitchin till I dun daid. Ef ole Mis' ware hyar thar wouldn't bin no 'sputin' der right way ter cook whife fokes' vittles.'' As her sense of violated dignity grew, the blue ribbon and prize money were forgotten, and the obligation of re-establishing the kitchen supremacy of an ancient régime became of first importance with this family dictator.

"Well, der fust time Miss Lucy—she's ole Mis's gran'chile—cum out hyar wid her haid full of thum notions, I never said nuthin' caze I thought how young fokes is always takin' up wid sumpin new. I ware settin' thar in that split-bottom chur peelin' taters. I disremembers der time I fust sot thar and peeled taters, but thinks hit ware er leetle piece afoah Miss Betty ware born, and hyar ware Miss Betty's own chile er standin' perzactly on that spot over thar, and tellin' me, who dun nussed her, not ter peel taters so thick, and she 'lowed that mos' der starch lay nighest der skin. She mout have bin sayin' hit jes ter argyfy, and then she mout not, but der Lord hope der chile, doan she know thar warn't no starch on thum taters, and ef hit ware, doan she likewise

know that I washes all der taters I peels?" Here Aunt Letty paused for breath, and to give place to her usual diatribe against her grandson, Israel.

"Isrul! O-oh, Isrul! Ef that ain't der ordacionest nigger on this hyar plantation! He dun gone outen sight when he knowed he got ter brung water ter wash thum greens. Isrul doan git his meanness frum his paw's fambly. When Hez'kiah—he's my son—'lowed he gwine marry that gal offen der Leetle Briar place down der river, whose daddy and mammy bofe b'longed ter ole man Smif, I said no good gwine cum of hit, caze ole Mis' never had nuthin' ter do wid thum Smifses. When Miss Betty ware married—that ware der bigges' weddin' this hyar county ever seed—thum Smifses never got no invite frum we alls; they warn't our kind of fokes. Now I axes yer, p'int blank, what kin yer expects of Isrul?"

In order to bring the family autocrat back to the account of how she came to make the prize cake, we ignored the aspersions she so abundantly cast upon the very respectable Smiths, and began to discuss among ourselves the progress being made in "domestic science," knowing that any claim for supremacy made through modern methods was a sure gage of battle, for the old woman always felt in honor bound to defend the traditions of her house. We discussed cooking and laundry work as

"professions"; bread-making as a science; the chemistry of housecleaning, and the philosophical principles of combustion. This was more than our autocrat could bear; she looked at us with sorrow and gave utterance to her thoughts in the following words:

"Well, yer can't blame me, honey. When that 'oman wid her cap on cummed and tuck holt hyar in this identical kitchin, ter show Miss Lucy how ter cook, yer can't blame me for kinder lookin' on der matter sorter ser'ous-like. Yer know, Miss Lucy kinder chile yit; she ware fotched up sence der war, and how is she ter know that der kitchin ain't no place for whife fokes? That t'other 'oman oughter had knowed better, howsumever, ef she ware fotched up in Bostin whar thar ain't no niggers. When I sees whife fokes doin' niggers' wuck I kinder s'picious, fur I'm like ole Mis', I doan bleeve in nun yore socion ekolity.

"Well, der fust thing that 'oman wid er cap settin' up on her haid 'lowed ter do, ware ter show Miss Lucy, ole Mis's gran-chile, how ter clean outen der stove and light er fyer. I set thar and watched her and studied 'bout what ole Marse would say ef he could see er strange white 'oman wid er cap on her haid er rakin' cinders outen we all's ole stove, and I tells yer, she got mos' this mack'el kigful outen hit. I keeps watchin' her whilst she keeps er pokin' leetle pieces of fat lighterd and leetle scraps

of paper in that thar stove. She put in sum leetle pieces of dry wood jes as ef they ware wuf least two bits er piece. Then she sot fyer ter hit and thinks she dun sumpin. I jes sets thar and watches, caze I knowed she ain't dun nuthin', fur thar's that wufless Isrul, sence he ware knee high ter er billy goat, he kin do what I ain't seed no whife fokes do, make er fyer outen green wood what's soppin' wet, and 'out any lighterd nuther. Thar warn't no special rec'mundations 'bout thum leetle pieces of wood, sence nun of ole Marse's chillun ever had ter buy any wood ter cook wid that I ever hearn tell on.

"Der 'oman wid er cap seed me watchin' her and she axed me how I gits 'long wid der stove chucked full of cinders. I bleeged ter 'ply back ter her that we alls never yit sot no store by er stove; that when thar ware sho nuff cookin' dun on this hyar place, hit ware dun in thum identical uvens thar, what ware fotched frum Varginny by ole Mis's maw. That all der chickin pies, mutton roasts, corn pones and hombly bread that fokes cum hyar and eats and says is so pow'ful fine, ware sho cooked in thum uven thar.

"Thar, now! Yonder cums that Isrul wid his ha'r standin' out frum his haid like hit doan know what shears is. That cums frum his mammy's fambly b'longin' ter po' whife fokes. Thar's bin er pow'ful sight of trubble

'bout that haid alriddy. Ole Mis' never could stand ter have er nigger 'bout der house wid long ha'r, and Perliny—that's Isrul's mammy —'pears ter think that long ha'r sign of free nigger. Arter all, she ain't so much ter blame when yer remembers that thum Smifses raised her mammy. Thar, now, look at that idjit! He dun put der water in der b'iler on der stove, stid of in der pot on der crane! What yer 'spects he thinks that kitchin chimbly made fur!

"Well, that 'oman wid er cap and Miss Lucy ware pow'ful busylike, makin' cakes fur der Fa'r," continued the old woman, returning to her text. "I never said nuthin longst they warn't 'spectin' ter eat thum in this house, caze, ef I kin hope hit, I ain't gwine let no sich cakes go on ole Mis's table whilst she jes dun daid and doan know nuthin' 'bout hit.

"Thum cakes! Well, honey, yer jes ought ter had seed thum! In co'se they ware purty ter look at, but yer ought ter had seed what they put in thum cakes; hit ware er p'int blank shame! They wouldn't hyar ter no good fresh butter, tho' thar ware der big da'ry crock full of hit settin' thar right foah they eyes. They tuck sumpin outen er leetle bucket what they brung frum town, and tho' I s'picions sumpin toler'ble scan'lous, I never knowed what hit ware till der 'oman wid der cap dun gone, and foah goodness, Miss Betty tole me hit ware grease made outen cotton seed. I ware that

'shamed ter think what had bin dun right p'int blank under my eyes! I hopes when I sees ole Mis' ergin she doan hold me 'sponsible, fur she is now whar she kin understan' 'bout these hyar new things, tho' I bleeged ter say, that cotton seed fixin's air not fitten fur decent whife fokes, and air p'intedly too low-down ter be mentioned in Heaven, whar ole Mis' is now. Do what I would, ole Marse kept cummin' back in my min' when I seed that 'oman dump two heapin' spoonfuls of bakin' powder outer er can inter thum cakes. Ole Marse useter 'low that sich er contrivance as bakin' powder ware made fur lazy niggers ter save elbow grease. Ole Marse wouldn't eat no biskit wid that stuff in hit. Der biskits ware beat wid er pessle on that block yarnder, plum till they riz natchally.

"We all's cakes ware beat one hour by der tall clock what sets hindst der do' in der big hall. Yer kin go and seed that clock er settin' thar right now. Thar ware Hez'kiah—he's my ole man what's gone ter glory, bless der Lord—and thar ware Unc' George, and Sis Fluridy, and Leetle Phil, that useter take tu'ns round ter beat thum cakes we alls made, what Ise tellin' yer 'bout.

"Honey, hit ware no use ter say hit warn't, caze hit ware, der ordacionest thing what ever happened ter dis fambly sence Unc' Si dun put varnish in der cruet by mistake fur warnut ketchup, and that ware der year ole Marse's

paw died, and people dun furgot hit now, and Unc' Si, he dun gone ter his 'count, po' creeter. That ware der onliest mistake we alls ever had in der fambly, fur Unc' Si sot der table der day Gin'ral Jackson tuck dinner wid ole Marse, but that ware afoah my time.

"Well, I felt so plum 'shame of Miss Lucy's name bein' onter that cake, caze I knowed how ole Mis' would feel ware she ter find out sich er thing as er cotton-seed cake had er happened in dis fambly, that I 'lowed that I ware gwine ter make er cake arter we all's way, and Miss Betty—she's pow'ful like ole Marse—said how she ware not only gwine tuck my cake ter der Fa'r, but tuck me 'long wid hit.

"When I made that cake," continued the family dictator, looking with pride at the blue ribbon and the three silver dollars, "I sont fur Sis Fluridy and Leetle Phil, fur they's plantin' on Kunnel Wilyum's place dis year; Unc' George, he dun daid, so I hadst ter try ter do 'thout him; I had my Hez'kiah in his daddy's stid, so I had ter make out ter git erlong wid thum three. Well, I tells yer alls, honey, yer never seed niggers wuck harder till that cake ware dun. I never let nobody tread on der flo' whilst that uven ware settin' thar, and I puts Sis Fluridy ter tendin' der coals on der led, caze I warn't gwine trus' Perliny, Isrul's maw. When that cake ware dun I didn't go and spile hit. I jes left hit like hit ware, 'thout puttin'

any pink frostin', or chocklet icin', ter kiver up hits outsides like thar ware sumpin der matter wid hits insides. I tells yer, honey, that ware as fine er pound cake as Aunt Nancy made when Miss Betty ware married, onliest she made 'bout er dozen of thum. Well, I went through all my chisses foah I could find er dress good nuff ter wyer ter der Fa'r wid that cake, caze I knowed ole Mis' ware please ef she knowed hit.

"When they cummed ter jedge thum cakes I ware pow'ful feared that they ware goin' ter git sum thum wimmin wid der caps on ter tell which ware der bes' one. I knowed hit warn't likely they knowed anythin' 'bout hit, runnin' 'round wid caps on der haids, and leetle pans in they han's, tryin' ter cook sumpin on stoves hiested up on legs and burnin' sumpin like tuppentine.

"When I seed Mistis Jedge Calhoun cum steppin' up, and den Mistis Cyarter and der Bland ladies ter tase der cakes, I knowed hit ware all right, and I didn't feel oneasy no mo'. They ware ole Mis's nabors and knowed what ware what, tho' hit did make me feel savig'rous ter see that onnery leetle cotton-seed cake settin' up thar so imp'tent, but Miss Lucy is ole Mis's gran'chile that didn't know nuthin' 'bout ole times.

"I hyared Mis' Calhoun says, 'I ain't tase no cake like dis fur twenty year. Thar is der

home-made rosewater flavor wid er dash of der bes' brandy, and hit has got der look of er ole-fashion pound cake 'thout any bakin' powders in hit,' and I likes ter 'low hit had sho nuff butter in hit, too. Hit ware all I could do ter keep frum holl'in', I ware that glad, so I jes sot thar and thunk of ole Mis', what's daid, and of Sis Fluridy, what didn't git ter cum ter der Fa'r.

"Arter while, hyar they cum and brung me dis hyar ribbon and er leetle piece of paper so I kin git my three dollars, and ole Mis's friends tuck me and shuck me by der han', and I ware that proud that I clean furgot 'bout that misble cotton-seed cake what tuck der second prize, and wish Sis Fluridy could see me.

"When that cookin' 'oman wid der cap cum 'round I ware bleeged ter say ter her that I dun know nuthin' 'bout measurin'-cups and steam b'ilers, and I always flavors by tase and wucks in my flour by der han'ful, and I likewise 'lowed, ef hit ware good nuff fur ole Mis', who sho ware pow'ful proud and partickler, hit sho ware good nuff fur t'other fokes. I always 'spicions these hyar cooks that's got ter measure everythin' they puts in der vittles. Our whife fokes, howsumever, always had plenty and never had ter measure and count der 'gredients of our cookin'.

"That 'oman mus' think I'm idjit, when she 'low that King Alfed wouldn't had burnt der

oat cakes, and King George had knowed how der apple got inter der dumplin', ef they had gone ter cookin' school. I doan know nuthin 'bout that, fur I ain't hyared of no sich kings, and 'twixt us, I doan bleeve thar ware sich, fur ole Mis' would have said sumpin 'bout hit. I do know, howsumever, that no sho nuff whife fokes ever made any cakes outen oats, and nobody but sich fokes as der Smifses ever sot any store by apple dumplin's. I 'spects ter hyar next that der Queen of Sheeber, ole Mis' useter read we alls 'bout outen der Bible, dun try ter make muffins and spiled thum."

SIS FLURIDY'S CAKEWALK

SIS FLURIDY'S CAKEWALK

The trouble, as the psychologists would have put it, was one of temperament. Florida's amiability was as an ever-ready rag for the horns of Aunt Letty's autocratic temper. Then there was Fadra Leanne, an especial object of the Dictator's scorn, and the idol of Florida's heart. Aunt Letty was uncompromising in her assertion that Fadra Leanne "ware bleeged ter cum ter er bad een," because the girl had been to school and was employed as a housemaid in town.

Florida was very large in size and light in color, a shade just a fraction deeper than écru; Aunt Letty was of the hue of polished ebony, a figure small and wiry, and was the one person in the household who stood second only to "ole Mis'." The special thorn in the Dictator's side was the respect with which the "whife fokes" regarded her life-long rival, Florida. The associations of her entire life included Florida; she could not have lived without this self-made foe, yet the Dictator's attitude towards the humbler servitor was intensely aggressive. The fact that she, herself, held precedence in the confidence and affections of the

family, made little difference with Aunt Letty when a question involved her supposed rival.

The immediate cause of the outbreak upon this occasion was the return of Florida's daughter to the plantation for the Christmas holidays, and the proposed cakewalk in her honor. Aunt Letty resented the "whife fokes' " interest in the arrangements for this festivity, and persisted in regarding Fadra Leanne as an alien, because she was "fotched up in town." The Dictator was as conservative as was the late Lord Salisbury.

"Thar's no use arg'in' wid fokes what ain't got no sense. 'Pears like they thinks satan dun furgot thum. Hit mo' likely calls fur pra'er than hit do fur anythin' else."

The Dictator came out from the chimney corner where the shadows had obliterated her small figure. She bent over the dying embers, and drew through the hot ashes a small clay pipe, which she brought up surmounted by a glowing coal. The white turban above her dusky face was touched by a faint gleam of light, and the interval of enforced silence was broken by the tremulous scrape of a bow across the strings of a violin. This sound came from the opposite side of the hearth, and caused the Dictator to remove the pipe from her mouth just as combustion was getting well under way in the little tobacco-filled bowl. The sacrifice of a personal enjoyment was a matter of prin-

ciple when it conflicted with the duty of expressing an opinion where the morals of her race were concerned.

"I doan 'spects much frum these hyar young fokes what doan know nuthin, but these ole niggers what ain't gwine live furever, plum furgits that they gwine burn caze dis hyar foolishness. Satan sho gwine git sum hoary-haided sinners I knows 'bout."

As her wrath grew, the efforts of the almost invisible musician became so feeble that the tones of the old violin gradually died away among the rafters overhead, the faint echoes escaping by way of the chimney. Aunt Letty put out a foot and gave the half-burned log a vigorous kick, which sent the slumbering sparks flying in every direction. She then turned and solemnly addressed the committee from the "big house."

"Lor', chillun, I ain't blaming yer alls, fur how yer gwine know sence yer ware fotched up sence der war! No, marm, I sholy ain't meanin' dis hyar onnery leetle scrimmage wid thum dagoes I hearn tell on; I means der sho nuff war what ole Marse tuck part in.

"Now, thar's Sis Fluridy; I mus' say I s'prised at her! Whar all that bringin' up ole Mis' dun gin her! She dun gone plum' crazy 'bout that gal of hern, Fadra Leanne. Yer alls mos' furgot Sis Fluridy's Fadra Leanne? Well, honey, she's 'bout der no 'countest thing

on top side dis yearth. Her mammy makin' out she doan know der Lord is p'intedly agin sich things as cakewalks! I doan bleeve they ever hearn tell of one in der whole of Isrul. I know ole Mis' never read nuthin 'bout hit outen der Bible ter we alls. In co'se, thar mus' have bin sumpin 'bout er cake at der weddin' feast," continued the Dictator reflectively, and with the air of one open to conviction, "hit's not reasonable ter bleeve der Marster gin thum wine 'thout any cake. Thar's one thing sartin," and here she brightened at her own shrewdness, "nobody ain't hearn tell of any dancin' in Caynan 'ceptin' der time that ongawdly young 'oman shuck her foot foah that ole sinner, Herid, ter 'stract him so he gin her der haid of John der Baptis'. Ise er Baptis' myself, and I doan bleeve in nun yer dancin'.

"Honey, doan fool yerself; 'tain't caze she doan know no better that Sis Fluridy gwine gin her gal er cakewalk, Crismus. She dun 'sper'enced 'ligion, dun perfessed and gin herself p'int blank ter der Lord, same as me, and I tells yer alls, satan ain't gwine git no satisfaction outen me."

Aunt Letty, like many another great personage, had " 'sper'enced 'ligion" late in life, and was now determined to make up for the years of worldly indulgence. At the above setting forth of the old woman's opinion, her better, or rather, her weaker, half, receded into his

corner, and with gentle solicitude, placed his violin in a cavity in the log wall just above his head. He then turned for consolation to his various pockets, and having found a piece of tobacco, cut a liberal slice from it, and placed the fragment somewhere in his cheek. It was well known that Uncle 'Kiah's "ongawdly" tendencies had long furnished a ready text for his wife's eloquence. He now looked up at the small dark face crowned by the white turban, and relapsed into a motionless shadow.

"I doan bleeve in nun yer town ways," continued the family Dictator, taking her pipe from her mouth and placing it in a crack by the chimney shelf, the crack where she kept her knitting and the smokehouse key. "I doan know how hit is now, but afoah der sho nuff war, monstrous few 'spectable fokes lived in town. Ise got my 'pinion 'bout these hyar fokes what's got ter pay ev'ry munt' fur der house they lives in; what buys they kindlin' tied up in leetle bundles, and what brings home they pervisions in paper sacks no bigger'n yer fis'. Thum's der fokes what never hearn tell on er storeroom, and doan know er smokehus when they sees one.

"In co'se thum niggers gwine ter dance," Aunt Letty exclaimed, suddenly remembering her principal theme, while she glanced at the shadowy corner where Uncle 'Kiah sat. "When they seed that town gal sot der pace, thar's

gwine be plenty ole sinners ter scrape der fiddle ter hope der devilment erlong." The old woman paused, turned her head and listened for a sound from the old man, but Uncle 'Kiah, made wise by long experience, was as silent as he was motionless.

"I ain't s'prised at nuthin! They tells me Sis Fluridy dun kilt her chickens and gooses fur der supper, and Miss Lucy, ole Mis's gran'-chile, dun made er cake fur sich er puppose. Yer alls knows that all thums what puts they foots in der road ter walk fur er cake ain't gwine stop till they walk ter der devil."

There was profound silence for a moment, and then we timidly asked, "Aunt Letty, did you never dance when you were young, and did you never have a cakewalk on the plantation in grandfather's time?"

The stooping figure unconsciously straightened, and Aunt Letty, slowly turning her head until her eyes rested upon us in pitying amazement, said: "Der Lord hope der chillun! Did I ever seed er cakewalk in ole Marse's time! Good gracious me, yer alls ain't l'arnt nuthin' yit! Thar ware sho nuff cakewalks in thum days! Ole Mis' iced der cake wid her own han's arter I made hit wid Sis Fluridy, Unc' George, Leetle Phil, and Hez'kiah ter hope me, and hit ware light as any fedder yer ever seed.

"Thar ware one Crismus, 'specially," she began, and then paused while she looked down

into the heart of the half-burned log, where the fire still glowed with a persistent intensity. To us, the old woman was becoming her usually interesting self. We had seen the Dictator superbly dignified, keenly sarcastic, and royally gracious; there had been moments when she could not conceal her loving solicitude, and others when we suspected a deep sense of humor, but not until now had we ever seen her sentimental. She, however, with a sudden toss of her head, returned to the tone with which we were familiar.

"Did I ever seed er cakewalk!" she repeated in derision. "I tells yer alls, thar ware one Crismus that we alls had der bigges' cakewalk and dance that ever yer hearn tell on. Lor', honey, these hyar niggers wouldn't knowed er genuwine cakewalk ef they seed one! That particklar one Ise mentioned, old Marse gin us hisself, caze der craps ware so onusually fine that year. That ware der same year Miss Betty, Miss Lucy's maw, ware born, and, ef I doan disremember, hit ware also der 'casion when 'Kiah, over thar, fust axed ter keep comp'ny wid me."

At this point Aunt Letty threw on to the dying embers a large piece of fat pine, which, bursting into a mellow blaze, sent her face and figure into a fine relief against the whitewashed wall. There was something in the picture—perhaps it was an expression of mingled pride

and pleasure—which, unexpectedly caught by the sudden flame, emboldened Uncle 'Kiah to take down his old violin and silently caress its sides with his slim black fingers.

"Ole Mis' ware young in thum days, and she had a lot of fine close," resumed the Dictator in a reminiscent tone. "She had one dress she brung from Nouleens when Marse Tolbert ware er baby. Hit ware sum kind of stuff yer doan see nowerdays when things so cheap and wufless, that Sis Fluridy's Fadra Leanne dun claimed she got er store-bought silk dress. I tells yer alls, thum ware der days when niggers and po' whife fokes didn't git no silk dress 'less sho nuff quality fokes gin hit ter thum. I got one in my chiss now, better nor any one Sis Fluridy kin show.

"That dress Ise tellin' yer alls 'bout, ware jes der lovel'est red wid sumpin like er gole stripe runnin' uppen down, and wid fringe on der sleeves—but, Lor', what yer chillun know 'bout fringe! Well, ole Mis', she thinks I kinder likes Si—he's der Unc' Silus yer chillun carn't remember. I 'tends like I thinks er heap of Si. Good gracious, honey, hit didn't make no diffrunce ter me ef Silus did wait on der table when Gin'ral Jackson tuck dinner wid yer great-gran'paw, and arterwards went ter Mungumry wid ole Marse when he b'longed ter der legislater!

"Si also kinder put on airs caze he cum nigh

gwine ter der Mex'can war wid ole Marse's brother. All der same, I didn't cyar nuthin fur him, tho' I do think that ware der reason ole Mis' gin me that red dress, caze she 'spicioned I did."

As Aunt Letty paused, a soft note timidly picked from the old violin went trembling through the room. We remembered that Uncle 'Kiah had been one of the field hands, and we had heard mother say that Aunt Letty's marriage had been considered a misalliance; a fact we doubted that the Dictator ever permitted her spouse to forget. As the old man's first, almost inaudible, note went unreproved, he ventured upon a second, and as Aunt Letty grew more reminiscent, there gradually developed a musical undertone to her monologue.

"When that night cummed, der big lint-room in der ginhouse ware all trimmed up wid cedar, and ole Marse had 'mos' er hundred taller dips fotched outen der smokehus and put 'round der walls in leetle tin holders. They lit up things pow'ful, but chillun, hit warn't nuthin ter der pine torches outen dose under der big water oaks whar we alls ware gwine ter walk fur der cake and er wreaf of artificial flowers.

"All der whife fokes 'lowed ter go ter der quarters that night, same as yer all's calkerlates on gwine ter that onnery leetle 'casion Sis Fluridy 'low ter gin her gal. Well, chillun, they all cummed, even ter bringin' Polly, what

ware nussin' Miss Betty, she ware der baby then. Lor', honey, yer oughter had seed me in that red dress wid er sash 'round my wase!

"Hit ware in der reel whar fust I notis that 'Kiah ware playin' that fiddle of hisn pow'ful fine, and at t'other times his pattin' ware oncommonly ter der pint. As I swung 'round in 'Ladies, s'lute yer pardners,' I cummed up 'ginst 'Kiah, and somehow I s'luted him stid of Kunnel Mason's big Alick what I ware dancin' wid."

Here the accompaniment developed into the old tune, "Hop Light, Ladies," for absorption in the past seemed to instill present courage into the silent old man.

" 'Kiah, thar," continued the Dictator with a toss of her turbaned head, "somehow axed me ef he mout walk wid me and try our luck tergether fur that cake. Wait er minit, hit ware jes dis way, chillun," she hastened to explain as the habit of maintaining conjugal discipline asserted itself, "I ain't er gwine ter tell no story to please nobody. I warn't used ter keepin' comp'ny wid der fiel' han's, fur yer sho mus' know thar's er pow'ful diffrunce in fokes. Howsumever, I warn't 'tall proud; I hopes yer alls knows I ware brung up in der big house, ter say nuthin of havin' bin ter Nouleens twict and ter der Varginny Springs onct. Somehow, I kinder felt sorry fur Hez'kiah, and I axcepts of his comp'ny."

At this admission the violin seemed to get beyond the old man's control, for the sounds from the chimney corner breaking all bounds, arose into a half smothered jubilate, and the head of the musician bobbed up as his great foot kept time amid the ashes on the hearth.

" 'Bout dis time," went on the old woman, looking down at the bright ember which still adhered to the charred log, "Marse Cyarter, he was ole Mis's brother, gin der signal ter start walkin'. 'Liza Jane, she led wid Willis what b'longed ter Mis' Cyarter, and yer oughter had seed her! In co'se she never got no cake; yit, der whife fokes said she put her foot in der road s'prisin' well. Yer see, chillun, yer couldn't 'spects much frum sich as 'Liza Jane, caze she warn't even born on der place but b'longed ter thum Smifses Ise bin tellin' yer alls 'bout.

"When me and Hez'kiah sot out, I jes knowed all thum niggers, 'specially Sis Fluridy and Ma'yann, ware lookin' at that red dress. I got ter say right hyar, caze Ise speakin' trufe, I never seed 'Kiah look so well sence; he sho had tails ter his coat, and a pa'r of gloves on what Miss Julia gin him when he fotched her trunk frum der boat der night she cummed back frum Mobile.

"Well, as I ware sayin', we perceded down der walk wid der water oaks er tetchin over haid, and that same old big moon yer alls sees

yarnder, er 'sputin' der right-er-way wid thum pine torches, till I dun forgot whar I ware." Here the old fiddle got entirely beyond control, and sang out a triumphant, "Glory, glory, alleluiah!"

"I tells yer alls der trufe, that when I stopped walkin' I ware 'mos' riddy ter bleeve Ise one thum ladies in der books Miss Julia usent ter read we alls when we fotch her candle upsta'rs fur her. I stopped so suddent that 'Kiah, he ware always der onkerdest mortal top-side dis yearth, like ter had fell over his own feets. And then Marse Cyarter cummed forerd and says—yer know he ware always pokin' fun at fokes—'Letty, yer Mis' thinks yer walkin' and yer reappearance air wuf that cake'——"

"And they sho ware," came in emphatic tones from the chimney corner opposite, where the musician with a flourish of his bow, gave a triumphant, amen.

"Now, jes listen ter me and my foolishness! Things dun changed, honey!" exclaimed Aunt Letty, in haste to get back to present principles. "I dun furgive Sis Fluridy fur sayin' hindst my back, that ole Mis' gin me that cake caze she favored me and thought thum artificials would look well wid that red dress. I doan bear Sis Fluridy no gredge; howsumever, I ain't never hearn tell she ever got any cake by walkin' fur hit. I dun 'sper'enced 'ligion, and

satan ain't gwine cotch me meddlin' wid his tools.

"Wake up thar, Hez'kiah! Go cut some wood fur Miss Betty's fyar. What yer bin sleep fur! Ef yer sot yer heart on hopin' Sis' Fluridy wid her devilment ter night, yer be sho yer doan temp' nun thum niggers wid that chune, 'Hop Light, Ladies.' Some of thum po' creeters what thinks they dun saved, air pow'ful weak, and I doan want ter be 'sponsible fur thum."

The scene of "Sis Fluridy's" cakewalk was a broad avenue that separated two long rows of houses flanked by trees, the boughs of which met in a solemn embrace, and the gray moss hung from them like the beard from the face of a patriarch. The place was known as the "ole quarters," and on the night of the cakewalk the upper end of this wonderful aisle was lighted by the rich glow of burning pine knots. It was what the old folks called an "open Christmas." The graves in the family burial ground on the wooded hill overlooking the cotton bottoms and the river were still covered with a green velvet pall, and the moon hung big and low like a Chinese lantern.

For some distance there could be heard the rhythmical fall of feet upon loose boards, also the measured strokes of Uncle 'Kiah's foot as he kept time to the music of his violin while he called out the "figgers." The cake occupied a

place of honor on the stump of a long-departed tree, and the "whife fokes" from the big house were unanimously chosen umpires.

After a short delay the upper end of the avenue was thronged with the contestants for the cake. The young men and girls in gala attire walked in couples with mincing step and affected air. Gorgeous in pink and white came Fadra Leanne, the belle of the evening. After an imposing progress, she was handed back to the top of the row by a knight in plaid trousers and a cut-away coat.

Uncle 'Kiah, carried out of all recollection of the Dictator's admonition by the scene and its associations, struck up in fine, old-fashioned style, the tune, "Hop Light, Ladies." When the music was at its most animated pitch, some one exclaimed in astonishment and incredulity, "Lor', Sis Letty, yer gwine put yer foot in der road! What's we alls cummin' ter!"

Out from the crowd came the Dictator; she stood for a moment at the head of the line, and then she drew her bent form erect and planted her feet firmly. She wore the blue calico gown and the long white apron of the old régime. Her face, thrown into relief against the torch-light, was surmounted by a tower of bandanna, wonderfully erected by some secret art known only to the initiated.

"Yer alls go 'long and lemme 'lone. Dis ain't der fust time I dun put my foot in der

road, and—ef I doan disremember—I 'stributed cake 'round putty cornsidible. Yer alls doan know how ter walk, fur how air yer dun larnt?" and then she began her pilgrimage.

Her dignified carriage, her easy movement, impressed the assemblage at once, and as the music urged her on with its familiar strain, we felt that the odds were strongly against Fadra Leanne. As the Dictator neared the goal she drew her head erect, her eyes filled with the light of other days and her thoughts with the memory of the red dress, she looked as she was, every inch an African queen. There was nothing in her manner that indicated a kindly equality, nor a gracious condescension; there was, however, an apparent superiority, which may have come by the grace of God and the endorsement of "ole Mis'."

It is needless to say that before the walk was half over the cake was the property of our household Dictator. When asked how she had managed to compromise with her conscience, she replied: "We ole pussons got ter ris' sumpin fur der young fokes; fur how they gwine larn 'less we show thum? All der same, chile, yer seed what satan dun did in the pusson of Sis Fluridy and that ole fiddle of 'Kiah's, and I dun warn him, too!"

"But, you got there, Aunt Letty," shouted one of "ole Mis's" grandchildren.

"Sho did," solemnly replied Uncle 'Kiah.

AN APOSTLE OF A NEW DISPENSATION

AN APOSTLE OF A NEW DISPENSATION

I

THE heavy old vehicle lurched violently to one side, making an incline that had no regard for the safety or comfort of its occupants, so that in a twinkling the dignity, as well as the best bonnets, of the two elderly ladies, lay crushed upon the opposite seat. There was another plunge accompanied by a bombardment of liquid mud upon the window glass of the old-fashioned carriage; there was a strain, a moment of suspense, and—a snap, followed by a slow settling back of the wheels into the "wash-out," which had caused the trouble.

"Thar, now; did anybody ever seed der like!" came in lugubrious tones from the outside.

"Abram, what *is* the matter?" called out a white-haired old lady, recovering her dignity and her bonnet at the same time, and endeavoring to climb upon the seat which was yet uplifted many degrees.

"Nuthin, ole Mis'; jes dis hyar white mar' acting mean. She know der holes in dis hyar road jes as well as I do, and she dun gone pup-

posely and pulled der kerridge inter one of thum, til der hine hub dun gone clean outen sight, and then she make bleeve she cyarnt pull hit out wid der roan mar' hyar ter hope her."

"Dear me, dear me! Abram, can't you persuade her to give one good, hard pull? We may come out all right, if you urge her gently;" and the old lady straightened her bonnet rim and felt in her pocket to see how her spectacles had withstood the disaster.

"That ain't der wus, ole Mis'. Der cotton plow line what I dun tied der trace wid foah we alls lef' home, is dun busted, and hit ware der bes' plow line I got. Der Lord knows what I gwine do! Der plow line busted and der plow er settin' thar in der furrer waitin' fur dis hyar mar' ter cum frum town ter finish that piece o' fiel', and—ef that warn't nuff—she dun bark her shin."

The voice by this time had come to the back of the carriage and assumed the tone of a confidential whisper.

"Dear me, Abram, the mare certainly is the most vicious animal we have ever driven. Who would have expected such behavior from old Milly's colt; really, she is as unreasonable as a mule! I shall tell the Colonel. Can't you tie the plow line? It is too bad! Only three plows, and it will take six weeks to clear and break the land!"

The old lady looked out through the begrimed

glass at the great field which stretched from the road, now a channel of mud, far westward into the angry glow of the winter sunset. It was a field rich in possibilities, but, in fact, overloaded with mortgages and dead, brown cotton stalks. Along the western edge of the road was a line of decayed rails, the best of which had long since been removed for the purpose of patching the sides of the corn crib. Towards the east the forest—such primeval trees as one seldom sees now—overhung the lagoons formed by the overflow of the river. From the latter arose bands of wild ducks, which, with the precision of a well-drilled army corps, wheeled into line and began their journey southward.

"Hit sho is bad," continued the muffled voice from the outside of the family chariot. "We doos our bes' and hit 'pears like things do gits wusser."

The old negro explained matters to his mistress with his usual success when addressed to her ear alone. She was always ready to see the merits of his case, for Abram had followed the Colonel through the entire War between the States, although, some said, it was at a safe distance. There was, unfortunately for the old man, another person in the carriage, and one who regarded life, its opportunities, mistakes, and possibilities, from a standpoint somewhat different from the one assumed by Abram. This lady still sat in the bottom of the carriage

where the recent careen had thrown her; she had made no effort to recover her dignity or her bonnet. The purple velvet headpiece now lay over one side of her face, leaving in evidence only one bright eye, now kindled with wrath.

"It's abominable, and cowardly, to lay this mishap upon the shoulders of the white mare. Probably, had it not been for her loyal persistence, we should have stopped permanently in the first mudhole encountered. Is there any reason for considering the mare responsible for the broken trace and the unreliable plow line? for that antiquated plow stuck in the mire, or for that field of stubble with its pile of mortgages? Place the blame where it belongs, on the shoulders of the Colonel. Had he only listened to George—but, there is nothing more difficult to cure than an adhesion of an old prejudice."

Here the lady raised herself from the carriage bottom and scrambled to the seat. Although not much younger in years than her companion, she still had the youthful agility of the slender, graceful woman, upon whom the years had placed only their passing weight without the responsibilities of married life. Her hair was dark and matched her eye in hue, and she still retained her love for bright colors and independent opinions.

"Miss Charlotte kin tuck sides wid der mar'

gin ole Marse, but that ain't gwine git us outen dis hyar hole," came through the leather curtain, with a deprecating accent.

"True, Abram," replied the older woman, "your Miss Charlotte has not thought of that."

"The mare is the only thing that can get us out of this bog with our Christmas purchases. Abram, take the mare and ride quickly to the house and bring another line to mend the trace; don't be long about it, for it is getting cold."

"Yer sho has said hit dis time, Miss Charlotte," exclaimed the old negro, who was soon mounted and off.

Miss Charlotte set the purple bonnet squarely upon her head, and lowering the window glass, looked out at the receding figure of the old man on the white mare. The pace being made must have met with her approval, for she turned to her companion and said, "The idea of converting a Pegasus into a packhorse!" but "ole Mis' " was too tired to smile.

The angry flush had almost faded from the sky and the chilly wind was creeping up from the river when the sound of hoofbeats was heard. The Colonel came around a bend in the road, looking like the knight that he was, his head well up and his hair blown about his face like a halo of silver. He came to the rescue down the channel of mud, mounted upon his old cavalry charger, followed by Abram upon

the white mare, and in his wake, a reluctant mule.

"Well, Polly," exclaimed the Colonel, dismounting and sinking ankle deep into the mud of the roadbed, "you and Charlotte are having a fine adventure. It will be all right in a moment and you will have something to tell Anne. I am afraid that you are cold, and," he added, "it was thoughtful of Abram to mount and come for assistance when you and Charlotte were at a loss how to manage."

"The rascal!" exclaimed Miss Charlotte, when, with the assistance of the mule and a cart rope, the carriage was dragged on to terra firma again.

II

A broad hall running through an old house. There were faded portraits on the wall and a beautiful old cornice, like yellowed ivory, bordered the ceiling. There were cracks in many places, and the wind came in under the front door. At one end of this hall was a great staircase, the kind that gave a feature of distinction to many of the fine old houses of the ante-bellum South. The wide, low steps appeared to have been especially made for the light footfalls of the daintily-bred women who passed up and down its length in the generations gone. Down its curved way now often floated the

notes of a violin. The same bars of music were repeated over and over as you stood in the hall below to catch the melody, but they always died away in a broken cadence. From a large room at the left of the hall, the firelight streamed out across the polished boards. The deep tones of the Colonel's voice could be heard as he sat by the hearth, facing his wife. Trouble had but lightly touched the faces of this couple; they had been saved much by a childlike disregard for the future and by a loyal faith in the precepts of the past. For many years they had considered their present as an ugly episode, and they continued to sit by their hearthstone, faithfully awaiting the second coming of the Old South.

After Appomattox, the Colonel had returned to the plantation and set himself to search for the footprints of his fathers amid the débris of a great social and industrial revolution. He pursued the methods of his honored ancestors; planting only cotton for market, using the implements his fathers had used, and year after year the harvest was—disaster. He would not rent an acre to an alien; he was opposed to white labor in the fields, and he would not employ strange negroes, nor would he sell his land outright. The consequences were the lopping off of large acreages by mortgage, a diminishing number of hands employed, and a constant casting aside of worn-out implements which

could no longer be tied together and made to serve their old uses.

In most things the Colonel and his wife were as one; the disturbing element in the family was the Colonel's sister, Miss Charlotte. The old soldier had a kindly indulgence for what he considered her eccentricities. He believed her unsettled by overmuch reading of newspapers. He used to say that she never rested, but stood with her hand on the pulse of the times, and ready to give the alarm when the least temporary excitement appeared. She retorted that her brother's intellect was still in swaddling-clothes, and the pulse of the times required an entire change of remedies. "Ole Mis'" confided to the Colonel her belief that Miss Charlotte only needed the opportunity to become a member of a woman's club, and she feared her influence over Anne, whom this progressive spinster had reared as her own child.

As Miss Charlotte passed along the hall she heard the Colonel reasserting the infallibility of the old methods of planting and his determination to win success in the coming year. His wife smiled acquiescence over her knitting, for had not the Colonel just inspected with approval her Christmas purchases made from the proceeds of the sale of a bale of cotton, her own especial property?

Miss Charlotte paused at the head of the stairs to listen, but the silence of a neighboring

room remaining unbroken, she opened the door and looked in. The firelight spread in a warm wave along the floor; it passed over the prostrate form of a young woman who lay on the rug, then striking the high-post bedstead, set that piece of furniture a clear silhouette against the opposite wall. The room was well supplied with the plain, old-fashioned comforts of the gentle-folks of two generations back, but was singularly lacking in those small modern luxuries with which the up-to-date woman surrounds herself. The only pictures in the room were a large photograph of a man's head, which stood unframed upon the high mantel, and a small lithograph of a sulky-plow cut from an implement journal and pinned against the wall over a quaint desk in a corner by a window. On the low chair near the girl lay a violin, the firelight kissing its sides into a terra-cotta glow.

"Well, a time we have had!" exclaimed Miss Charlotte, seating herself in a large chair near the fire. "You were well at home, Anne. This eternally going to pieces, this unwarranted faith in patches, are causing me to lose all patience with the Colonel."

"But, Aunt Charlotte, he is so good, so unselfish and hopeful," came from the dreary young voice on the floor. Miss Charlotte peered down at the figure and then glanced at the violin with a vindictive frown.

"Good! Why, of course he is good! Would

I be here to-night if it were not for his goodness and Polly's! I would be out in the world earning a living after my own fashion—and, perhaps, a name—if it were not for their sheer inability to take care of themselves, and their need of some one to stand between them and the badness of this wicked world.

"The Colonel," continued Miss Charlotte, solemnly, "makes one understand what Lowell said about Emerson, that 'when one meets him the Fall of Adam seems a false report.' God bless him; but he is awfully pigheaded!"

"I have thought that I might do something, too," said the girl, putting out her hand and softly touching the violin. "He will not consent to my going away and making a place in the world for myself."

"Let the music go for to-night," returned Miss Charlotte, impatiently. "It is not your fault that the ideal always has to go to the wall when the practical takes the floor. I have had another letter from George, and he is as persistent as ever in believing that his father's prejudices may be overcome; and it is my opinion that it is our duty to go rough-shod over the Colonel, if we care to preserve a roof over his head. He is now determined to raise money on the only unencumbered piece of land he possesses, for the purpose of buying more obsolete trash. Plow lines, indeed!" and Miss Charlotte

vented her feelings by a vigorous assault on the fire with the long-handled poker.

"Yes," said Miss Anne, sitting upright and pushing her hair back from her face, "the money George has saved for—well, Aunt Charlotte, we are both willing that it should go to provide modern implements for working the crops the coming year, and which in time might work off all of the mortgages. George will give up his position in the big implement house and come home to look after things here in an up-to-date manner, if his father consents to leave all management to him."

"There's the rub!" ejaculated the spinster, pausing, in order to emphasize her words with uplifted poker. "He will never abdicate in favor of the crown prince, unless—to be plain—you persuade him to do it and consent to become crown princess," and Miss Charlotte resumed her attack upon the fire with renewed energy.

The soft color spread over Anne's face, but she did not answer, only putting out her hand and softly touching the violin.

"Perhaps," she said, "the ideal may help the practical. If I only could catch those two lost notes, I am sure that I could win the five-hundred-dollar prize offered by the *Journal* for an Easter anthem. Those two triumphant notes have escaped me entirely, and it seems that all harmony left the house when George

and his father began to have trouble about plantation policy. Even the mocking bird, whose home for two seasons was in the tree by the window there, was gone all summer, and the anthem I believed finished a year ago, has a break in it I cannot mend."

"Now, Anne," interrupted Miss Charlotte in her sharpest tones, "do be practical for a moment, and then may St. Cecilia help you to find the missing notes, which may be very well in their way, but are not to be compared in interest with the notes of the Colonel's that are due. He goes to town in the morning to raise money on that last strip of unencumbered land in this family, and before his return, you may be sure, he will leave most of it in the hardware shop. I wish you would go with him—now don't protest—for I have a package to be expressed, and which contains George's Christmas present. Anne, mark my words, and don't forget them, that I expect you, while driving to town, to persuade the Colonel to resign everything on this plantation to George's management for the coming year, and let us have a fighting chance for our lives."

Miss Charlotte here arose, and taking her candle, walked out of the room.

III

The day had been a trying one to "ole Mis'." Everything seemed to go wrong, and her tower of strength, the Colonel, was not within reaching distance. Shortly after he started for town, accompanied by Anne, the troubles began. The old buggy had just disappeared behind a clump of hickory saplings, when Abram announced the white mare's leg too badly "barked" to use her, and that Ned had come up from the flat field with the news that the ole bull-tongue plow had gone to pieces in the furrow. Dinah, "ole Mis's" chief of staff, gave it as her opinion that the falling off of the milk in quantity and quality was due to the character of food; "der critters didn't git no nur'shment outen dry stuff"—and so on it had gone. As the evening closed in clear and cold, and "ole Mis'" settled herself for the customary hour before candlelight, which always had been one of the chief enjoyments of her happy life, she found that the worst of this day was yet to come. Miss Charlotte was more restless than usual, refusing to have the curtains drawn, and persisting in an endless march up and down the long room. When the candles were lighted, and "ole Mis's" nerves had reached the point where she felt obliged to speak to Miss Charlotte, the hounds from the stable yard announced the arrival of the Colonel and Miss Anne. It was now Miss

Charlotte's turn to be impatient of any movement in the room, and she listened for the coming of her brother as though she could catch some assurance from his footsteps. They came in at last, their faces bright with the cold, and their eyes lit by an inward glow.

"Well, Polly," exclaimed the Colonel, kissing his wife and nodding graciously to his sister, "don't blame me! I have surrendered without discretion, foot, horse, and artillery."

Don't blame him! It now seemed to "ole Mis' " as if she had known all the time what this journey meant. She said nothing, but laid her white head upon the Colonel's shoulder and cried as she had done when George went away.

The letter was sent and the response came. George would be with them at the New Year and would bring from the Northwest all modern implements for successful farming. The strain that had rested upon the family for so long, was suddenly lifted, and the happiness was of the kind too deep for words. The Colonel would not tell how he had been persuaded, and Anne had nothing to say. "Ole Mis' " thought of only one thing—she was to have her boy back again in his rightful place. In her imagination, the new West had always been synonymous with lawlessness and demoralization, but she did not quarrel with the thought of it sending new ideas into her old life if it also brought out of that vast distance her only child, her boy.

Anne was quite contented, and perseveringly dwelt upon the mutilated bar in her anthem, while Miss Charlotte was aggressively triumphant in having carried her point. Abram's face was the only doleful thing on the plantation, for he "didn't bleeve in young fokes showing ole fokes what ter do; and ole Marse sho ware easier ter git 'long wid than Marse George."

The last day of December was passed in an anticipation of the most intense kind. The old people, after the manner of their school, had put on their best attire to welcome both George and the New Year, while Anne retired early with her violin. She went over and over the notes of the anthem, feeling the strings with her sensitive fingers, yet pausing each time at the break in the fifth bar. She knew not whether the dying year was taking with it her hope or her failure, but there was not the usual despondency in her attitude as she stood tall, and gently swaying, in the centre of her room. She was a fine, graceful figure in the firelight, trying with infinite patience to fit into her composition the missing notes. As the clock in the hall below told the last stroke of the year and "ole Marse" opened the front door to grasp the hand of his son, two notes arose clear and decisive from the throat of a mocking bird, the strains from the violin blending harmoniously with them, the fatal bar was passed success-

fully, and the anthem attained a deep, and satisfying, amen.

IV

Easter came, and with it such a glorious resurrection of hope and faith. Harmony in the house, and abroad in the fields nature had arisen to meet in full accord the intelligent efforts of man. The hard, brown earth, which had not been turned in years, responded to the sulky-plow and lay warm and throbbing with life beneath the sun. The cultivators and listers had done their work, and the time-honored plows and hoes were piled away in the old cotton shed. Last year's fodder had been shredded by the new machine and the corn, which formerly had taken many days of hard labor to shell, had passed through the patent sheller, and now lay in new bins ready for use. Preparations were being made for ensilage, which would supply the cattle with juicy foods, and many other improvements had been inaugurated.

The spring's promise was more than fulfilled in the autumn's realization. There was every prospect of lifting a large mortgage from the old home, which had ceased to be a collateral for the Colonel. Anne now looked with an especial pride at the windmill on its airy perch, bought and placed with the prize money brought by

her anthem, and which served as a wedding gift to her husband. "Ole Marse" smiled, however, when he shook his head and said that he did not believe in trying to do better than nature.

Miss Charlotte, as usual, had the last word: "Sentiment is all right when it is up-to-date and assists in redeeming an old plantation, long considered worn out, but, Anne, you should not forget that in this instance, sentiment was only an instrument for obtaining the implements which did the work. In plain words," ended Miss Charlotte, with decision, "I have a strong conviction that the three greatest reformers on record are John Knox, the French Revolution, and myself."

IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES

IN THE HANDS OF THE PHILISTINES

I

The hands of the clock had reached the place on the dial which marks the hour tacitly accepted as the end of the industrial day. The stenographer had departed, leaving a most agreeable silence in the place of the click, click, of the machine. Mr. Felix Stringfellow locked his desk, and then turned in his chair until he commanded a direct view of the back of a tall, square-shouldered man, who was standing by a window.

"My dear George," said Mr. Stringfellow, in the impersonal tone assumed by the busy lawyer when there is no retainer in sight, "it is too late now to try to negotiate for any part of that land; it has been bid in by Horace Graves, Esquire, of Chicago."

"To the devil with Horace Graves, Esquire, of Chicago," replied the tall man, without turning. "I have been renting that land from the state for fifteen years with the honest intention of purchasing. Of course, I did not know that I would not have the option of retaining the

land I have improved. May I ask," and there was the faintest suspicion of a sneer in the tone, "if there is no other tract out of the 6,000,000 acres that might be just as suitable to the requirements of Mr. Horace Graves?"

"Now, my dear fellow, how should I know? You see, your ranches are on a part of the land offered by the state, and Mr. Graves has a map and a copy of the law controlling the sale of those lands."

"The question is just this," exclaimed George Howland, the cattleman, "I should like to know how Mr. Graves pitched upon this piece of land, which has many of the advantages of a general improvement. You see, there is an impression back in the hills, that the range lands, as well as the mineral sections in that tract, were settled, or held, at one time in the name of one John Tolliver."

"How is that?" asked Mr. Stringfellow, hastily. "There is no record of a John Tolliver ever having owned a foot of land in that part of the country. I have gone over the records," he admitted, looking closely at his companion, his eyes narrowing down to two small, dark lines, in his pale face. "That land you hold has been a part of the public domain of Texas since the days of the Spanish grants, and in 1836 it came clearly within the territory of the Republic. It is not necessary for me to say that

since '45, it has been held by this state as a part of its school lands."

"Well," protested Howland, doggedly, "there is a tradition, firmly believed in by some of the older ranchmen, that John Tolliver's claim was a substantial one, and suspecting this flaw in the state's title has caused me to feel secure in an ultimate opportunity of purchase. I will say this, Stringfellow, that I should have been consulted by the local agents who have been approached by large purchasers on the outside."

George Howland and Felix Stringfellow had been at Princeton together, and they had come to Texas at about the same time, from their respective states, Mississippi and New Jersey. Howland had followed the strong hereditary bent given him by a long line of planter ancestors. The outdoor life, with the books he loved within reach, appealed to him, and before the decided decline of the cattle business, he located on a large tract of state land in Western Texas and lived the life of a ranchman. Stringfellow had gone the way that was most congenial to his inclinations; he had drifted from the commercial life of his forebears, and had put his education to its most profitable use in the place of his adoption. He began his professional career as a corporation lawyer, but after the word "corporation" had become unpopular

in Texas, he continued to take in the same big fees, under the title of land agent.

Mr. Stringfellow arose from his chair and prepared to accompany his friend to the hotel where the latter was stopping; his hand was upon the office door when it was arrested by a gentle rap from the outside. The door was opened to admit an old man, one who was evidently of Spanish descent. His swarthy face and black eyes were emphasized by the uniform whiteness of his hair and beard; his clothes were out of date in cut, but exhibited an extreme neatness, which is often a most noticeable token in the gentleman. He smiled and bowed.

"Mr. Stringfellow," he said in excellent English, "I have been directed to you as an expert land adviser." He produced from his pocket a packet of papers, old, worn, and torn at the corners. The lawyer returned to his desk and resumed his seat, after having placed a chair for his new client. Howland bowed courteously to the old gentleman, touched his hat to his friend, and was about to depart, when the newcomer said: "There is no necessity for your leaving the room, sir, as I perceive that Mr. Stringfellow was about to accompany you, and my visit is not within office hours. I beg that you be seated, and I shall not inconvenience you for any length of time."

Howland acknowledged the courtesy of the

stranger, and resumed his place at the window, where he continued to look down at the evening crowds in the street.

"Now, my dear sir," said the old gentleman, addressing the lawyer, "I should have introduced myself by name. I am Fillipo Gonzales, and somewhat of a land agent myself. Perhaps you may be aware that the throwing upon the market of 6,000,000 acres of land by the state of Texas is not unlikely to bring complications arising out of the inalienable rights of some of the holders of the old Spanish land grants in the late province of Texas. You may also know that the records of those old grants may not be found in the land office at Austin, but in the archives in the City of Mexico, and also in those of Coahuila and Nueva Leon. The records at the old capital at Leon Vicario are well worth looking into. So many of the Spanish-descended families have died out, so much of this land has passed to the state of Texas without question, that it has been only when a claim of this character comes before the supreme court, and is decided in favor of the claimants, that we are reminded of the fact, that underlying the modern titles are those of the old Spanish grants. Now, I have in my possession copies of the records of a once famous grant; it lies in our western counties. It was made by the Emperor Ferdinand VII. to Don Juan Taliaferro, the head of a noble house, who had ren-

dered eminent military services to the crown. The original records of this grant may be found in the archives of the state of Coahuila."

Mr. Stringfellow's smile of polite attention gave place to a look of absorption; he rested his elbow upon the arm of his chair and with his eyes upon the face of Mr. Gonzales, replied: "I do not think, my dear sir, that you had best worry about those lands; you can never get legal possession of a foot of them, by stirring up the question of Spain's worm-eaten grants. I will, however, admit, that in several instances, and after prolonged litigation, the courts have sustained those old grants when the titles were direct. When land of that character has been recovered, it has seldom benefited the owner, from the fact that they are invariably in out-of-the-way localities, inconvenient to reach by railroad, and impossible of cultivation by persons of moderate means."

"There you are wrong, I believe," quickly responded Mr. Gonzales, "for those large grants of land may now be easily converted into a number of small farms and fitted for cultivation at once by the use of improved agricultural implements. You must know, that the pioneer, or first soiler, of to-day, relies upon other than a hoe, a spade, or a hand-plow. However, I do not intend to purchase," and the Spaniard's voice carried a shade of coldness. "I intend to establish, beyond a doubt, the pres-

ent owner's title to those estates," and here he spread upon the desk a faded old map bearing the name of a topographical engineer whose commission was received from Mr. Jefferson.

"This large tract of range lands," continued the old man, tracing an invisible line across a wide unlettered space upon the dingy old map, "are eminently susceptible of cultivation. They have been, however, for some years in the possession of one George Howland, a ranchman, and a renter from the state. The mineral lands in the mountains adjoining can be reached without difficulty, and their value is immense. The point is here: these lands in the grant are recorded as one tract, and, notwithstanding this man Howland's occupancy of a part, it has always been held as a whole by the right of an actual possession of its owner. In plain words, many miles away from Mr. Howland's ranch, and quite in the mountains, there is a hacienda where the owner sometimes passes a summer or a fall month. The range lands have never been reclaimed from the state, because of the inability of the present owner to handle them. The fear that the state may make the mistake of including this tract in its present sales and the advent of wonderful agricultural appliances for opening the timbered parts and cultivating the ranges of pasture lands, have altered the situation. This land will no longer be considered for ranch purposes."

"The devil!" exclaimed Howland.

"I beg your pardon," retorted the astonished Mr. Gonzales.

"Rather," interrupted Howland, "I should beg your pardon. The truth is, I do hate to see the cattlemen pushed to the wall, or thrown down like so many squeezed lemons. They have done great things for the state in the past."

"My dear sir," said the old Spaniard, with a sympathetic shade of regret in his tone, "your interest in our picturesque cattleman is commendable, but his departure is in accordance with the law of progress. I am afraid he will have to go; yes, I am afraid he will have to go. You see, my client also sympathizes with the cattlemen; the family, for generations, derived its income from cattle as well as from silver, and I may add, what is not generally known, that in the old days there were great fortunes made from the quicksilver and cinnabar of those mountains. My dear sir," continued Mr. Gonzales, "the quarrel is not going to be between the cattlemen and the farmers; it is going to be a struggle for right-of-way between mine owners and the farm people, when the steam plow and the automatic sowers are going to win out."

"Ah, I see!" said the lawyer, and the lines began to disappear from his brow. "Should you care to leave your papers, Mr. Gonzales," Stringfellow continued, "I will go into this matter at my earliest opportunity."

Arrangements were soon made by which Felix Stringfellow became local agent for the heirs of Juan Taliaferro. He was also representative of Horace Graves, Esquire, of Chicago. The tract involved was known as "The Juanita Ranch and Hill Lands," held under an almost expired lease by one George Howland, cattleman, and who, incidentally, intended to die hard in a fight against claims of ancient grantees and modern purchasers backed by steam plows, traction engines, and windmills.

II

"I tell you, boss," said a small, thin man, whose features looked as if they had been badly varnished and had afterwards cracked from exposure to the dry atmosphere of the Western range, "I never heard of anybody living in the hills back, yet it does seem to me that the rural delivery fellow did say last fall that John Tolliver was at a small shack back in the mountings. Ef they is going to haul things through this place in order to settle the whole outfit on theirselves, we'd better stop it at onct."

The cow puncher put out his foot and gave a vigorous kick to the half-burned mesquite chunk which lay across the open hearth. The blaze threw a ruddy glow upon the set features of the ranchman seated at a table in front of a small window through which could be seen the

wide range with the foothills beyond. His face was turned towards the west and the hills; before him on the table lay a pile of papers and a recently opened letter.

"Ted," said Howland, addressing the cowboy, "Ted, I am going up into the hills and see what the devil is going on in that direction. I hear there have been surveyors and prospectors on the other side of the foothills, and there will be an attempt to bring in implements to break up the land, and establish the beginning of a number of small farms. There are four claimants for this land—old Gonzales, with his antiquated grants, wants to oust me; there is a rumor that John Tolliver, of former days, has materialized, gone into the foothills from the other side, and now proposes to transport agricultural implements through my pastures to enable him to cultivate the land on this side; and then, there is the Chicago fellow, who has bid us all in. I am going to leave you in charge here, and go up, myself, to see what they are doing on the other side."

Ted winked at the fire and lit his pipe, while Howland returned to the letter in hand, a frown gathering as he read the closing lines: "Now, George, do be sensible; you cannot make a stand against legal rights of others. Mr. Graves is a gentleman as well as a rich man, and I am sure that arrangements could be made for a liberal time allowance in the matter of shipping

your cattle. Believe me, my dear fellow, yours always truly, and to command, Felix Stringfellow. P. S.—Gonzales returned for his papers upon hearing of Mr. Graves' purchase, and gave me no time in which to look into the Spanish land grant."

The day was far advanced when Howland set out for the foothills. Before he left the ranch he put Ted in charge, with stringent orders to prohibit the passage of any one across the cattle range, and, if necessary, force should be used. He took the bridle path towards the west, and as the rising ground lifted him higher into the sunset spaces, he felt the full force of what had been done to the aboriginal Indian and the pioneer settler of the early days. They had been pushed on towards the indefinite beyond, and aggregations now filled the place of the individual who won the land from its virgin estate, and made of it a coveted possession. The cattleman and his ranch would soon be only a picturesque memory; the agriculturist with his mechanical contrivances, and the miner with his syndicates of capitalists at his back, would be the practical facts.

Howland had gotten well into the hills where a southern spur of the Guadaloupe mountains towered above him, when he came upon an ancient bungalow caught in an opening between two low crests. It was aglow with lights, and

in response to his call a man came slowly down the path followed by a large mastiff.

"I am sorry," said the man very politely but positively, "the owner of this hacienda is not at home, and for reasons which I am not permitted to give you, orders were left that strangers are not allowed on the place. I do not intend to be unnecessarily inhospitable—in fact, sir, the whole place is posted. You may, however, meet the owner on your return journey."

The man was young, not unpleasant in appearance, nor rude in manner; it was his words which caused the blood to rush to Howland's face and his hand to grasp the pommel of his saddle to keep from grasping the collar of the stranger's coat. A few moments of reflection caused him to realize that the young fellow was only obeying orders, as Ted was then doing on the ranch below, keeping trespassers at bay until the right adjustments could be made under a new code. He turned his horse's head, and abruptly rode away into the fast-gathering darkness.

III

As Howland approached the enclosure surrounding his ranch house, there appeared to be something unusual about the place, and from the number of horses and wagons parked

around the outer sheds one would judge that a patriarchal caravan had made the premises a halting spot. Howland could not see in the starlight what the wagons contained, but he gave a low whistle as he dismounted and his horse walked off to the corral gate where the bundles of alfalfa were lying.

"Good Lord, boss," exclaimed Ted, coming out of the kitchen, whence a path of light led to Howland's feet. "I suppose if I were in the army I would be shot before breakfast. John Tolliver has invaded this ranch with a whole tribe, bag and baggage, and is now entrenched by the fire in your room."

"The devil!" exclaimed Howland in his turn, stopping suddenly and looking steadily at the cowman. "You need not feel too sure that you will not be shot. Where are the boys, and where are the Winchesters? It would seem that revolvers have become ineffective."

"Now, boss," said Ted, wrinkling his cracked face into a semblance of a smile, "you just step in and talk terms with John Tolliver, and then decide how the defense should be conducted." Ted lost for the moment his usual mode of expression that had placed him upon an equal footing with the native cowpunchers, and assumed the air of a man who had not lived all of his life among the cactus and mesquite. Howland felt in his belt for his revolver and his knife, struck the side of his boot with his quirt,

and throwing back his shoulders, advanced alone to meet the enemy.

"I never heard of such an outrage," came to the boss's ears in a voice, clear, high, and unmistakably feminine. "They should be sent to the penitentiary for molesting honest people on the highway."

"Lor', Miss Wan, they sho air mighty biggerty. I hopes we alls kin do wus than jis pentenshury. I hopes hit will be nuthin short o' hangin'."

Howland stood framed in the doorway of his small adobe house, his magnificent proportions set off by the gray flannel shirt, and tan leather riding breeches, which for once were not covered by the picturesque yet disfiguring chaps. He wore the wide sombrero, which he now involuntarily removed in the presence of the invader.

The enemy was small and slight; she stood in front of the open fire which threw into an effective picture the short riding skirt, dark blue jacket, and the small cap set jauntily upon the chestnut curls. The girl twisted her quirt in her hands and looked wrathfully at the fire. Her companion was an old negro woman in a brown stuff gown and a sunbonnet which extended beyond her head like the roof of a shack; in the kitchen, Howland could hear the voices of many strange men. Turning suddenly, John

Tolliver's face was brought on a line with George Howland's heart.

"All this talk of the chivalry of Western men! I have a good mind to go back East and label Gonzales an old fool."

"I am sorry," said Howland coming forward, "but there must be some mistake. They told me that Mr. John Tolliver was here and I find——"

"Miss Juanita Tallaferro, sometimes known as Juan, and always pronounced by Americans, Tolliver," interrupted the girl.

"I believe," insisted Howland, the ghost of a smile drawing the corners of his mouth, "that you scarcely understand. I hold land by a rent contract from the state; I have lived on it for fifteen years with an unalterable intention of buying it. I gave orders that until this lease expires, no one should trespass upon a foot of it. I hope, however, that you know, those orders do not extend to a young lady who has mistaken my bridle path for a highroad."

Here he smiled again, but seeing that his guest was not in a humor for pleasantry, he added seriously: "I will not be annoyed by these would-be purchasers, who come into this country with a tent, claim land under sale, and take forty years in which to pay for it. All of this makes plenty of profitable graft for men who have no legitimate means for acquiring wealth. Believe me, Miss Tallaferro, I have no

intention of obstructing your transit to your hacienda in the hills."

"Now, listen to that!" exclaimed Miss Taliaferro, throwing out her small gauntleted hands and turning again to the fire. "Aunt Patsey, do you hear him?"

"I sho do," assented the old negress.

"Now, just listen to that sophistry; fifteen years' residence! Why, my people have owned this land for centuries—at least, that is what Gonzales says—and as for a right by an actual residence, hasn't that domineering old man driven me every year into those hills to that dilapidated shack—called a hacienda, if you please—and given me to understand that I was in actual possession? Here comes a man—not you, another, a Chicago man—who says he bought the hacienda and hills and has designs upon this section also. Gonzales determined—that is, I determined—that the right of possession shall count for something, so I am moving in. I do not mean that I am actually moving my trunk—that's up at the hacienda yet, where I intend to stay so long as it suits me—but that I shall build a house down here; and really, I do not mean to be impolite, but your very short lease should not count against my 'all time.'" She looked at him as if the question was definitely settled, and that his temporary stay would be by her sufferance.

"So, you propose to move in?" asked How-

land very gravely, yet with a lingering smile. "My actual possession with an unexpired lease in hand does not count for anything?" still very politely.

"You see, Mr. Howland—Howland's the name, I believe—you see, I did not lease the land to you; I think the state took a good deal upon itself when it let you have it, for Gonzales says this old grant of mine should be perfectly valid."

She regarded him now with more interest, as if there were a possibility that some sympathy might be due him, and, probably, that was the reason she concluded to temper the wind to this shorn sheep.

"Mr. Howland, I have brought good tenants who will assist me in turning 'God's own country' into one inhabitable by man, for you must know that this tract is the very last thing I have left from what should be a vast inheritance, and, just think, I have never had a bank account in my life! The truth is, I have not been treated exactly right by my immediate ancestors; they used up everything, and left me nothing but old land grants, which, Gonzales says, are really very valuable."

"Pardon me," interrupted Howland, "but have you straightened out your titles? Have you the legal right to begin carrying out your plans? Suppose you succeed in getting rid of me?"

"Why, of course, I shouldn't run you off without due warning, but I must begin to sink wells and put up windmills for irrigating the land, and I am going to build a house and get ready for the coming year," replied Miss Taliaferro in a conciliatory tone.

"Thanks," said Howland, looking about for his one chair as he became conscious of his oversight as a host. Not finding the chair, he brought forward a box which he turned on end and offered to his enforced guest. This act of courtesy the young lady declined, apparently being too restless to confine herself to any one place in the room.

"You remember what I said about the right of possession?" asked Miss Taliaferro with a wise shake of the head. "Gonzales says that to get hold of a thing affords an immense advantage. I am here, and—no offense intended to you, Mr. Howland, as an expiring renter, I mean, as a renter with an expiring lease—I am determined to hold my own against all claimants. It is strange, but I never was interested in these old land grants before."

"What do you propose doing?" asked Howland, looking down into the clear, brown eyes of John Tolliver.

"I had forgotten to say that Gonzales is somewhere out in your backyard. He will know where to leave the windmills and how to direct my men. I think Aunt Patsey and I will go

to the hacienda and remain until the house on this place is built." She looked at him suspiciously and at the evidence of a permanency displayed by his belongings.

"I believe, Miss Taliaferro," said Howland slowly, "that, for the present, you will have to accept for yourself and Aunt Patsey my freely offered hospitality. I do not believe that you will be able to take possession of the hacienda; there is a man up there, and he threatens trespassers——"

"A man!" she exclaimed; "why——"

"Yes," interrupted Howland, "I have been there and he would not let me in; had received orders to regard all guests as trespassers."

"Why," continued the young lady when she had recovered from her astonishment, "I directed Philip to oppose the coming of every one while Mr. Gonzales and I were away."

"It may have been Phil, himself, who so hospitably greeted Mr. Howland," suggested Mr. Gonzales from the doorway.

"Of course," replied Miss Juan decisively, as she began to pull on the gloves she had removed in the excitement of giving expression to her state of righteous indignation.

"Not so fast, my dear," said the old man, "I must have a word with Mr. Howland."

There was something so frank and sensible about the Spaniard after Howland had followed him into the adjoining shed—which was,

for the time being, a kind of neutral ground, lighted by a dim lantern and hung about with harness and stock saddles—that the latter found himself reaching into his own mind for a practical basis upon which Miss Taliaferro's claim might rest.

"A moment, Mr. Howland," whispered the elder man, leading the way into the dimmest corner, and as far as possible from the door opening into the adjoining room. "I hope you will pardon a direct and pertinent question," he continued with a small bow and a quaint smile, "but I should like to know if you ever have been guardian to a young lady with a mind of her own, and whose personal experiences of life were of the most insignificant; say, a young lady to whom you were unreasonably attached, yet to whom you owed a duty of control, and whose affairs you were in honor bound to direct?" The question, apparently, being a serious one, Howland answered in the negative, adding, however, that the lack of such experience was surely through no fault of his own. The old man smiled and shook his head as he answered:

"When you have lived as long as I have, and know the elemental characteristics of women as well as I do, you will then be truly able to appreciate my position. Mr. Howland, the truth is, there is an explanation due for this invasion of your premises. The facts are, and I trust

you will not betray me, I have found that our old Spanish grant has gone the way of most time-worn things. I also saw that Stringfellow would find some way to gain possession of all this land for one client or another. I knew that the tract was far too large to be purchased by my ward under the law made for settlers, yet I determined to retain some of it for her, by actual settlement. Now, the obstacle which blocked my way was the fact that she would not consent to occupy state land and be called a settler, or homesteader, yet it is only by a residence of several years that this land may be procured. Really, Mr. Howland, to make a long story shorter, I have kept up the romantic fiction of the old Spanish grant, and in order to lure her into these wilds, I have been obliged first, to take her imagination over the trail of her ancient inheritance, where the commonwealth statute of limitation has long ago killed our old treaties with the Latin nations. My dear sir, the truth is, I have succeeded in raising such a gust that the question now is, how to stop it. I hope, sir, that you may at once take up this portion of the tract, since you have settled here," and the old diplomat, with a sly twinkle, hastened into the next room to consult with his autocrat in regard to the desirability of accepting Mr. Howland's hospitality for the night.

Being full of a clear understanding, Howland

saw to the comfort of his guests in the small house, to the stowing away for the night of the men who had come with Gonzales, and having turned the horses into the corral, he went to bed himself upon a couple of boards in an outlying shack.

IV

The years of enforced occupation passed; the pasture lands were no longer covered with wild grass, nor the wide stretches with occasional cactus and mesquite. Another and great revolution had taken place in the far-away plains and in the valleys of the Southwest. In this instance the weapon had not been the frontier rifle, and the reward of years of toil no longer a cabin in the wilderness-encompassed patch. The battle had been short and sharp; the victorious arms were the traction engine, disc plow, and all their attendant labor-saving implements wherewith nature is now more gently subdued than formerly. The immense ranch gave place to the innumerable small farms. As social life developed, good roads came as a response to the ubiquitous automobile, while the whole scheme of this new Western world was bound together by the long-distance telephone.

Miss Taliaferro stayed on until a pride in the growing value of her land was rapidly taking the place of the older pride in the Spanish

grant. She did not understand, however, why she had not ejected Mr. Howland from the part of her property he had so long usurped. He still held his own, though his herds were reduced, his pastures smaller, and his shipments fewer. He had stayed on in the decline of the cattle industry, because, as he confessed to himself, he was cultivating a genius for neighborly love.

V

The November fields were almost shorn of their last cuttings when Howland cantered out of the old corral and turned his horse's head towards the western hills, where he always suspected an ambushed foe. He was well aware that this foe had made many descents from the stronghold above, and laid siege to the fortress wherein was entrenched his heart's desire. The ranchman had gone this route many times to reconnoitre, but had only just now arrived at the moment of attack. He did not believe in the long siege wherein the besieger was as apt to starve as the besieged; he had abided until the time for a daring assault, and it had now come. Howland had just returned from Austin, and in his breastpocket lay the key with which he proposed to reach his heart's desire.

Everything on the Juanita farm announced the end of a prosperous year's work. There

had been no lagging here. The fields were bare and brown; the aftermath of the hay crop still held a reminiscent tint of green and the great arms of the windmills were at rest. As Howland rode up to the house he could see through the open doors the brilliant colors of the sunset beyond. Mrs. Gray, Miss Taliaferro's cousin and companion, sat on the porch with a light shawl around her shoulders; the younger lady was invisible.

"I believe that Juan is following the sunset," said Mrs. Gray before Howland had finished tying his bridle to the post by the porch. He looked at her and smiled; he wondered how much Gonzales had told her of certain things.

"Perhaps I too had better follow the sunset. After all, I will be on the trail of the star of empire; you know it is said to take a steady course westward," and Howland disappeared around a corner of the house.

Juan in the western field, a very different Juan from the one that had invaded Howland's cabin several years before. She seemed to have grown taller, and was certainly quieter; it was the serenity that usually comes with a mature purpose and something accomplished. She had also exchanged the short riding-skirt for one of a trailing length. She did not hear Howland's footsteps on the soft earth, and he had almost reached her when she turned and saw him.

"I was just thinking of you," she said with a discouraging candor. "I was wondering how I could get possession of the land you have usurped for so many years. You know, it seems a shame that you should go on renting land from the state which rightfully belongs to me." She said this with a smile which robbed the words of all ungraciousness, but suddenly, becoming possessed by a fear that he should believe her wanting in courage, she continued:

"It was not from a lack of desire that I have not ousted you long ago; it was from a want of funds wherewith to put the law to you. You see, I must expand. If I only had more land, I should be able to produce almost every necessity of life. Really," she exclaimed, "I should have here a small empire in itself."

"Then, O Empress," replied Howland, "let there not be further trouble; here are the deeds to your territory; you have won it by right of conquest and its vanquished sovereign is a part of your spoils."

"What does this mean?" asked Miss Juan, lowering her eyes to prevent her vassal from seeing the light of understanding there.

"That the old Spanish land grant has not been in working order since the days of your great-grandfather; that I was provident enough to buy state land from under your eyes, in order to save it for you, and now, dear," he continued, knowing full well that he had made a

breach in the wall some time before, and by which means the conqueror had been conquered, "don't you think that discretion is really the better part of valor, and that an alliance would be the best of all policies?"

FROM DAN TO BEERSHEBA

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"He should be wise and leave off before his luck changes, as it is sure to do," said McGrath, handing my wife the skein of red silk that had fallen from her work basket.

"It is too bad! A man of his appearance and address should not be so completely absorbed in business affairs," Eleanor remarked, accepting the skein from McGrath and offering him a small bow as a substitute for the thanks he deserved; for in order to reach the requisite distance under the table, he had been forced upon his knees.

"He is entirely out of his place in Wall Street; he would make an ideal clergyman," continued my better half, with the air of one who had known Devereaux from his youth up.

"I presume, you believe he would be more becomingly environed were his business in the church at the head of Wall street?" asked Miss Adeline, who was resting her lovely chin in her hand and her elbow upon the library table. The young lady was in her usual state of idleness. My wife always gave ear to Miss Adeline's remarks because that young person is considered the brightest member of her fam-

ily. McGrath also gave respectful attention, for the seemingly good reason that he is silly about Eleanor's sister.

"It is difficult to believe that a mere run of luck has wedded him to dollars and cents," further remarked the pride of the family, frankly looking into the oval mirror that hung between the windows.

"A more cold-blooded fellow I have never known," supplemented McGrath viciously.

I was the only person present who really knew Devereaux. I had refrained from expressing myself for the very good reason that I have made it a rule never to disturb the opinions of my womenfolk unless a principle is involved; it saves much exertion on my part and helps to preserve the self-esteem that is a characteristic of good women. When I found my friend's character becoming woefully misconstrued within the bosom of my own family, I decided to give voice to what I knew.

"It may surprise you," I suddenly announced, addressing myself to the three, but in reality directing my words at McGrath, for I knew, despite his absurd jealousy, he was the one person present who was capable of truly appreciating my story—McGrath possessed the saving grace of humor, in whatever guise presented. "It may surprise you," I began with the unusual consciousness of having the domestic floor, "when I suggest it is not improb-

able that Devereaux acts from inspiration; that is, from a natural ability to make money, an ability that, one might say, was thrust upon him against his inclination. I do not believe he keeps at it from an intoxication that came upon him from a first success—let me see—it must now be eighteen years ago. Why not credit him with the possession of genius, instead of having more than one man's share of fool's luck?"

At this point I looked directly at Miss Adeline, who, I knew, had a little theory nicely formulated for the purpose of making McGrath miserable. She had several times intimated her belief in Devereaux's intention of marrying when his millions had grown to a sufficient number, and McGrath believed in my sister-in-law's potency.

"I honestly believe," I continued, feeling for the first time that I was of some account in the conversation, "that I am the only person who knows just how Devereaux found himself."

My audience was not in sympathy with any proposition that implied Devereaux having found the place nature intended for him. They, the women, repudiated the idea that nature had any knowledge of Wall Street or the stock exchange, but desired to be told immediately how the gentleman under discussion had found his millions.

"Do begin, Richard," demanded Miss Ade-

line, discarding the paper-knife with which she had been trying to demolish a penwiper, and coming around to my side of the table.

"To begin at the beginning," I answered, "it would take us back some twenty years to the time when I met him first. By the way, the direct means of my knowing Devereaux at all was through my New England proclivity for pie and milk."

"I cannot associate Mr. Devereaux with pie and milk," said Adeline with decision, at the same time regarding me with an expression of incredulity and contempt.

"No more can I," I replied just as positively and with more spirit than I usually display towards a member of my wife's family.

"Adeline, do refrain from expressing an opinion until we hear what he intends saying," interrupted my wife, who in order to be just, found it necessary to be insulting. As usual, I ignored Eleanor's blunder, and continued:

"When I left Rhode Island after my graduation from Brown University, I brought to this city with my law books, a wholesome love for my native viands. I soon formed the habit of dropping into a certain little dairy lunch place for my favorite refreshment of pie and milk. There was a day when I sat with a large section of apple pie and a liberal supply of sweet milk in front of me while I read the court reports in the morning paper. I did not turn to look at

the newcomer who had taken a seat at my side, although I was conscious of his presence. The dignified and noiseless old waiter who had served me so long in lieu of the kaleidoscopic young waitress, asked my neighbor in the peculiarly persuasive tones that always implied a recommendation of the refreshment offered: "Pie and milk, sir?"

" 'Certainly not,' answered a strong, clear voice, the soft intonation of the South dashed with mingled amazement and wrath. 'Certainly not. I should like some food that is usually served to the average hungry man. Bring me a good steak and some potatoes; I prefer porterhouse,' he called after the waiter, who had sidled away, amazed in his turn. The place was what is known as a dairy kitchen, and the pie and milk were among its famed specialties, while steak and potatoes were unknown quantities. The young man made a direct appeal to me.

" 'What do you suppose, sir, the idiot meant? Oh, I beg pardon!' he exclaimed, as his eye fell upon the despised dainties before me.

"It was in that way we became acquainted; each strong in his provincial prejudices, yet drawn together by the force of dissimilarity. I soon learned that he was a student at Columbia College—it was before the day of the University and of its removal uptown—and it was un-

necessary for him to tell me that he was from a Southern state.

"It was, however, some months after our first meeting and after he had visited me several times at my office, that he invited me to his room. It was a small retreat up many stairs on Thirty-fourth Street in the vicinity of Broadway, a locality that has changed its character and color since that day. I believe it was upon my second visit to his sky parlor that he first told me something of himself. I should say, he did this in a half-diffident way that was strangely at variance with the firmness and decision with which he usually asserted his opinions.

"It seems that he should have inherited large land interests from his father, who died when Devereaux was quite young, but during those years that brought such dire necessity to a people wholly inexperienced in the practices of small economies, his patrimony had passed from him. He told me his mother still possessed several hundred acres of land which were almost worn out, having contributed their share to the family income for more than a century. The value of that remnant of land lay in the fact that upon it still stood the mansion in which his mother resided.

"I had known him for about eighteen months, when he made me another confidence; he told me that every acre of his mother's land was mortgaged in order to pay his college expenses.

This was a statement I could regard only from one viewpoint, that of the New England man. How was it possible for me to imagine what a Southern woman was capable of doing in a matter of that kind! It would never enter my head that any one would commit the sin of mortgaging every foot of land they possessed to defray the college expenses of a son, unless the boy was abundantly endowed for an especial profession, and whose prospects were exceptional. I enquired of Devereaux whether it was the law, medicine, or engineering he was studying, and I shall never forget the surprise I felt when he replied in the most matter-of-course manner:

"'Oh! the classics, of course. I am rubbing up my Latin and going a little into Greek. I am not sure that I have a natural bent for any of the professions. My people have always been planters, and the men have always had college educations. My father and grandfather studied at Princeton, Harvard, and Oxford. I believe my grandfather had a degree from Göttingen, or Heidelberg, but——' and he paused, as if to prepare me for the information he was about to impart, while unconsciously his manner assumed a vast amount of pride, 'my great-great-grandfather stood at the top of his class at old William and Mary. That was before the days of Jefferson and Henry, and the Apollo balls. I know that those old fellows did not make bad planters because they knew

Xenophon and Virgil when they met them. I know the dead languages did not disqualify them for dealing with living issues. I believe that when the old county needed soldiers, my ancestors were all the better prepared by a knowledge of the histories of the Greek and Latin peoples.'

"He turned from the subject, while I sat amazed to learn that any woman would risk the roof over her head, and the very bread of the future, for a tradition so absurd. Sentiment is all very well in its way, but how, in Heaven's name, was a mere knowledge of the classics going to lift that mortgage!

"Devereaux had been for months pegging away at worthless tasks, while I imagined him preparing for the labor that would some day result in placing his family upon its feet again. He must have seen the astonishment that possessed me, for he laughed nervously, and said:

"'Don't think that we have risked everything in order that I follow in the footsteps of my fathers. Please take note—I am not at all uplifted over the fact—my mother still possesses three heirlooms which are, as yet, unencumbered, and which are said to be of considerable value. There is a portrait of an ancestor, a colonial councillor, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. This picture is esteemed by connoisseurs to be one of the finest examples of that artist's skill. It is said that Horace Wal-

pole offered a thousand pounds for it before it left the studio. You see, it might have been at Strawberry Hill, instead of at Devereaux Hall; all of which should add to its commercial value.'

"He was smiling so unconcernedly that I fully believed him to be jesting. The familiar allusion to Strawberry Hill carried me so far out of my practical bearings that I then and there relinquished an intention of offering a suggestion which might have been susceptible of an interpretation into wholesome Yankee advice.

" 'The other articles are,' continued Devereaux, the smile becoming half defiant and half tender, 'a loving cup of chased gold, which was presented to my ancestor by Charles II. when he came into his own. It was a fine token of kingly appreciation, for the old gentleman was then at the head of the colony's council, and he proclaimed Charles when there was a risk attending such announcements; in fact, he continued to proclaim the Stuart in spite of Roundhead and Parliament. What plucky old fellows they were!

" 'The third relic of another day, is a curiously carved brass warming-pan, said to have belonged to James III., commonly called Pretender.'

"There was a subtle flavor of humor in the account of those few remaining personal ef-

fects in the Devereaux family. The humor was there, but of so delicate a quality that it was almost overcome by the greater strength of the pathos.

"After that little break in the veneering that coated the outer form of intimacy, confidence rapidly warmed, and I found my young friend an enthusiast of a certain kind with sentiment to spare. He seemed to have a natural antipathy to modern motives and methods, and abhorred the ways of cities." Here Miss Adeline obtruded a question in a tone of decided skepticism:

"Richard, I should very much like to know if this is a story of the imagination or a piece of realism you are offering us? Mr. Devereaux a man not in affinity with modern methods! Mr. Devereaux out of joint with the times and has a dislike for city life! I am willing to accept the portrait and the loving cup, even the warming-pan may stay, but when I am called upon to regard warm blood in the veins of a man whose stream of life is composed, apparently, of ice water, I am not to blame for exhibiting a certain amount of incredulity. I can easily believe that Mr. Devereaux's love for the country is confined to the limits of a dingy office downtown where he occasionally waters stock."

If there is one thing more than another I particularly abhor in a young woman, it is flippancy, and I do not believe that even McGrath

relished this interruption, although he laughed. No doubt, however, that a laugh with him comes easily, for he is a weak man, and Miss Adeline is flippant. My wife endorsed my attempt at biography by impatiently demanding the entire story of Devereaux's development. I therefore treated the interruption as it deserved and addressed myself directly to Eleanor.

"Devereaux's dislike of city life seemed clearly the result of hereditary influences. For centuries his people had been what might be termed lords of the manor; it was not to be expected that he should find any attraction in commercial life. I had little patience with his opposition to what we call progress. He would sometimes sit for an hour and grow eloquent over advantages enjoyed by a life removed from 'so-called' modern conditions; he would say that a manhood was only imperfectly developed that had never known nature in its elemental aspects.

"He spoke continuously, and almost with religious awe, of a certain spot in the mountains of his native state. This place had once been a part of his family estate, and at the sale of the estate, had been appraised at a low figure because of its worthlessness as an industrial asset. He asserted his determination to buy that barren half acre, as he had felt peculiarly defrauded when it passed into the possession of aliens. Had he spoken of the scenery with en-

thusiasm, or lauded the climate of that region, I should have understood and sympathized, but when he referred to it as his spiritual mecca, I found myself as far out of my bearings as I had been in the matter of the Sir Joshua portrait.

"He frequently and solemnly asserted that in the shadow of the great, gray rock, his nature had undergone a change and he had been given proof of our claim to immortality. He used to say that the altitude and solitude which shut out man by denying him the usual inducements to perpetrate his vandalism in the form of artificial 'improvements,' had much to do with the influence this spot possessed over the spiritual and moral natures. Devereaux described the place with the fervor of an artist, and I am sure that I should have instinctively recognized it as quickly as I would recognize the Parthenon at Athens, or the Coliseum at Rome, neither of which I have ever seen, but with the pictures of which I have been long familiar.

"It was a large rock near the summit of one of his native mountains, overshadowed by the pine and laurel, and from beneath which flowed one of those mysterious mountain streams. At the foot of that rock and beside that small stream Devereaux had lain through the short summer nights looking up at the stars, and in the silence of that Nebo, he believed that he had

learned more of divine truth than he had ever done from the pulpit in the church below. The church, he used to say, was a joint stock affair with the rest of mankind as shareholders, while there, upon the heights, he saw as well as heard, and the séance was all his own.

"About the time that Devereaux came to New York, there resided in this city a woman whose exceptional character should preserve an example for those who suddenly grow rich. She came originally from somewhere in the central part of this state, but hers was one of those rare natures that make provincialism impossible, and that know nothing of the influences of environment. The whole world, especially the American world, was hers. Local patriotism and personal bias were unknown quantities in her conception of life. She had come up from the people of whom we make mill hands, laundry women, and shop girls. She had worked in the same factory with her husband before their marriage, and after that event, they had combined their savings and gone West. There is no use in claiming for either Mr. or Mrs. Hagan exceptional abilities; they simply started out in life in a day of great opportunities, and they possessed to an eminent degree the tough fibre from which success is oftenest made. They went into the mining camp before the day of transcontinental railroads, and the woman had the advantage of sharing with her

husband every hardship endured by the pioneer. She had seen and shared the struggle from the beginning, and the memory of that time never ceased to dominate her life's purposes. It gave the sympathetic understanding, which all of the after successes had no power to dull. The toil and rough companionship did not in her case work out their usual result of domestic disillusion, for this large-hearted woman sweetened everything she touched.

"The first that the East ever knew of Mrs. Hagan was when she went to Washington with her husband, a United States senator. He died before his term was many months old and before she had felt the exactions of the social demands of the national capital. After Senator Hagan's death, his wife came to this city and bought a handsome house, as you may remember. That move was not inspired by any personal preference for New York, nor for any desire to acquire social prestige. It gave her broader opportunities, she told me, wherein to learn more of the different elements of metropolitan life without making a specialty of any one phase.

"Mrs. Hagan did not remain outside the pale of the upper ten, hers was one of those rare personalities which disproves the tradition that a woman should be able to identify at least three grandmothers in order to be presentable. She had rare tact, extreme gentleness, and I have

often maintained that her general success came through the possession of a great and good heart, rather than from any intellectual gift. Her memory, however, now rests almost entirely upon the fine collection of paintings she left to her native town, and not upon her charities, which were entirely private, though of the broadest and most liberal character.

"Just at the time that Devereaux gave me his confidence, I took advantage of a fortunate opportunity to tell Mrs. Hagan something of that young man. Her interest was caught at once, not only in himself, but in his former life, his mother, and his prospects.

" 'Bring him to see me,' she said one evening, as she took leave of me at her drawing-room door. In making this request, she threw out her hand with the open palm upward, a gesture peculiar to her, and that was always symbolic of her good intent.

"I finally persuaded Devereaux to go with me to call on Mrs. Hagan. He was very candid in telling me that she was of the class of people he most wished to avoid. It was the beauty of her plain rugged face that won him at once; the honest handclasp caused him to say on coming away, that she was not of any class, but of a supreme individuality.

"It was not long—not near so long as he had made me wait—before he told her of his plans, and, at her earnest desire, he described the

Reynolds portrait, the loving cup, and the warming-pan. He laughed when he told of these, and said that the only excuse he could offer for such absurd confidences, was the genuine interest she displayed in the intrinsic value of those articles apart from their social associations.

"At that time another friend was very much interested in Devereaux; this was Milton. You rememberd Isaac Milton?" I asked, turning to McGrath. "Milton was then one of the greatest scientific financiers in the Street. He always worked by well-conceived methods, and his anticipations were realized as undeviatingly as problems in mathematics. He used to come to my office for an occasional smoke, and, I imagine, for the relaxation of seeing some one who was not interested in 'the market.' He and Devereaux met frequently. I remember that he tried to convince the young fellow, after they had discussed various methods of speculation, that he had talents of no mean order in that line. Devereaux would shake his head and laugh, and after Milton had gone he invariably reverted to his lonely mountain mecca which was unmarked by man's sordid ambitions. He used to say that the place was nature's couch where one could rest without hearing the jingle of silver in his pocket.

"There came a time that winter when the boy was sorely afflicted and severely tried. He

lost his mother. That trouble settled down upon him with such overwhelming force that he seemed unable to see his own life save through the sombre lens of his sorrow.

"Spring was upon us when Devereaux said to me, 'I may as well tell you that I have left college, and when I have settled my small affairs, which I intend to do at once, I will find myself in the position of a man who has to take to the industrial arts immediately, in order to ensure bread. By the way,' and the pleasant old look came back, 'was it not providential that I did not learn to like pie and milk?'

"When I left Devereaux I went to Milton's residence, for it was after office hours, and stated Devereaux's case to him. He at once offered that young man, through me, a position of clerk in his office. The salary was a fair one, and Milton put his offer into writing, giving it in every way the semblance of a purely business proposition. Armed with this assurance, I intended to return at once to Devereaux's room, but on going down into the street I found the great world on wheels leisurely rolling home to its dinner, and among the throng, Mrs. Hagan.

"If one would always leave well enough alone! The good woman, drawing her carriage close to the sidewalk, insisted that I ride a few blocks with her. I pleaded haste, but lingered

long enough at the carriage door to confide to her Devereaux's sad plight, and the offer of employment from Milton.

"'Ah, that's well!' she exclaimed. Then, with the rare tact that so often distinguished her most generous impulses, she continued, 'I could not offer him employment; there would be something too suggestive of a consciousness of his need on my part. Men do those things much better than women.' She referred to many things which made me understand that she had not forgotten the days of her own struggle.

"'Should a young man have a small amount of assistance at the beginning, it is more far-reaching in its effect upon his success than thousands of dollars would be after he has won independence,' she remarked as we parted.

"I wrote Devereaux that night and enclosed Milton's offer. I saw nothing of the young man for several days, and then he came to my office. He was dressed in a dark gray suit and carried a small valise.

"'Well!' I exclaimed, looking up with what I believed to be an encouraging smile, and was met with a grave and formal bow.

"'I am going away,' he said abruptly.

"'Going away!' I repeated, stupidly. 'I hoped that you would consider Milton's offer.'

"'Milton's offer is good enough in its way, and I do not say that I might not have considered it had it not been for this—this other of-

fer. I must say, that you scarcely acted the part of a friend when you told of my necessities to a woman, and one who was capable of insulting me with that,' and he threw upon my desk a small envelope. 'I cannot say how you may regard a communication of that kind, but to my mind, it could emanate only from a parvenue,' he continued.

"The small envelope contained a short note from Mrs. Hagan. Without alluding to his financial condition, she expressed her sympathy in the loss of his mother, and should he contemplate breaking up the old home and disposing of his personal effects, she hoped that he would consider her as a purchaser for the Reynolds portrait. 'And, of course, Mr. Devereaux,' she continued, 'you would not expect me to be more niggardly in regard to the price than Mr. Walpole—was he then Earl of Orford —who, it was well known, was more penurious than generous, yet was willing to pay a fair sum for genuine art rather than lose his opportunity.'

"To my thinking the note was delicate and tactful. The only mistake that I could see lay in the fact that Mrs. Hagan wrote at all, rather than having sent for Devereaux and made him the offer, with her kind eyes looking into his troubled ones. If she could have had an opportunity to talk with him!

" 'I see nothing insulting in this,' I replied,

feeling annoyed by his extreme sensitiveness, while I at the same time recognized his viewpoint as one beyond his control.

"'Oh, no! Of course not! I did not expect that you would. When a people have no other standard of value than one of dollars and cents, their proximity becomes torture to me. There is absolutely nothing in this city that cannot be bought, provided one has sufficient money. You sell your daughters, and your sons sell themselves; you sell your home if you can get for it a little more than it cost you; you sell your local associations; and after these there is precious little left worth bartering. I despise the whole of it!'

"I am glad to remember that I had the good sense to hold my tongue. There are times when it requires all of a man's courage to enable him to hold his tongue; there is nothing easier to misunderstand than silence.

"'I am going back to the old place and arrange to farm a few acres. If I starve, it will be there, not here.'

"He held out his hand, saying, 'I am going first to the headwaters and lie in the shadow of the old rock; perhaps the pains of life may pass away in that solitude, and the duties of life may be made plain.'

"He went, and time gradually effaced, not his memory, but the sorrow I felt at our parting. I remembered him as the truest idealist

I had ever known. I was willing to take him as a type, and no longer wondered at the lack of business success we believed to be peculiar to a certain class in the South. That he had latent talents seemed improbable, for he had had strong inducements to bring them forth, and there had been no indications.

"Time wore away, and my surmises as to Devereaux's fate finally ceased. I had gone so far as to think of him as dead and lying beneath the pines on the far-away heights in the shadow of his rock.

"One day, in the third year following Devereaux's departure from New York, I was seated at my desk in the inner office when some one entered without knocking—that was before the days of the ubiquitous electric bell. I looked up and my eyes rested upon Devereaux, but so changed a Devereaux that he appeared only the outer shell of the man I had known. It was not alone that he had matured wonderfully, but there was an altogether joyously hopeful expression about his face, and his carriage was that of a man who had found himself. His head was well up, his shoulders were thrown back, and his step was firm.

" 'You see I have come back,' he said simply.

"I arose and grasped his hand, for I did not realize until that moment what a load had lain upon my conscience.

" 'I am back to stay,' he continued, still hold-

ing my hand. 'I have decided to grow grasping and gray in your midst,' and he took the chair I offered.

"'Ah, that's good!' I exclaimed, smiling at him for want of a knowledge as to what I could safely infer.

"'Yes; colonial councillor, loving cup, and warming-pan are also in this city; were crated and sent flying.'

"'You don't say so!' I fairly shouted in my amazement. 'I hope that now you have them here with you, you will feel more at home. You know, I wrote you some time ago that Milton's offer is still open.'

"'Thank you, and Milton also, but I do not care for the position of a clerk—unless I fail. I am thinking of going into the Street myself, and should be still further obliged to our friend Milton for a point or two as a starter.' He took a turn across the office and then came back to my desk.

"'That is what I shall take with me into the Street,' said the young volunteer in the ranks of the reckless, and he threw upon the desk a check for $6,000, signed by Sarah Hagan.

"'That is not much to take with you. You had better not risk it if it is all you have,' I answered with a feeling of intense disappointment, for, after all, he must have borrowed the money from Mrs. Hagan.

"'I will risk it, and I believe I shall succeed,

for this money comes from the sale of the councillor and the attendant heirlooms.

" 'You see, I went back to the old place filled with other determinations and, perhaps, with many unkind thoughts besides. I went, as I said I would, to the headwaters and the rock, where the footsteps of progress had never reached—I believe that was what I said to you —but in reality, what do you suppose I found?' and he laughed with a whole-hearted merriment I had not heard from him before.

" 'Don't be astonished; it has taken me nearly three years to get even comparatively used to the situation. The fact is, I found the vandal called progress had visited my holy of holies during my absence. I lifted up mine eyes to behold that monument of eternal peace, my great, gray rock, and there I saw painted across its face in large, crude letters, these words: "Get Your Shirts at Bodkin's Clothing Parlors in Frazierville." Nothing on God's earth could have torn from me so effectually every shred wherewith I had clothed my ideals. I like consistency; the sentiment that hallowed the thought of the rock was the same that surrounded the portrait, the loving cup, and the warming-pan, and so long as I could not control the methods of man, nor of woman, I believed the only honest course was to succumb.

" 'Of course, this did not come to me while I stood and gazed at that ridiculous advertise-

ment on that rock. The conflict between the past and the present was fought out in my heart; such battles are deliberate and give no quarter. At the termination of the struggle I received a most opportune letter from Mrs. Hagan, renewing her offer. Without any reference to her former note she urged me to place the heirlooms where they would be cared for, and where I could see them whenever inclined. She wrote just as if she knew that I was coming back to New York.

"'As I had no other available means, and my possessions consisted principally of broken ideals, I concluded to take her advice. I frankly told her all I had said to you about her, and what do you think she replied? That she would have been disappointed in me if I had not taken that view of the matter at that time. Women are queer!'

"On the strength of the $6,000, Devereaux went into Wall Street, and luck is still with him."

As I finished my story, Miss Adeline looked triumphantly at McGrath.

Women are queer!

A REVOLT OF THE QUILL

A MONOLOGUE WITH INTERRUPTIONS

A REVOLT OF THE QUILL

A MONOLOGUE WITH INTERRUPTIONS

East of the Mississippi the smoker was a dull piece of neutral territory, where citizens of the world met without the excitement of a common local interest. The large man with good intentions, found it a haven of refuge from the lunch-eating, child-ridden people in the sleeper; the commercial traveler, having put his "grip" out of sight and his top hat in the porter's care, here took his ease with the consciousness of being immune from the torture caused by a baffled desire for liquid refreshment. The stretches of the Indiana and Illinois countries had soon become a bore to the Bostonian going into the Southwest to present new schemes and acquire new franchises, while the old war correspondent—on his way to the Japanese front in Manchuria—found his experiences dwarfed by the stories of the ex-lieutenant of a volunteer company, who had been disappointed of active service in our late war with Spain. However vivid these reminiscences afforded by a two months' stay in a palmetto swamp in southern Florida, or one

day's experience before a canned-beef committee, they could not be made to fill in the distance between Harrisburg and St. Louis; the truth was, the whole thing had become unbearable.

It was the second day out from St. Louis and the train had swung on to the great transcontinental line, taking the afternoon sun squarely into its eyes, when relief came to the five occupants of the smoker. The commercial traveler —now reduced under a state law to the necessity of a pint bottle of Apollinaris—had just remarked that he applauded the provincialism of the "Blue Grass" preacher, who described Heaven as a "Kentucky of a place," when the Colonel came aboard. It was somewhere in Texas that we stopped to take on a supply of fresh water, and the Colonel.

Whether a Colonel by courtesy alone, it was immaterial to those who knew him, for the part was entirely in accord with his physical qualities as well as of his martial temperament. The gray frock coat, white tie, and wide-brimmed hat, would have passed unnoticed by four of the men in the smoker had they been less bored, but the traveling man—who had been over this line before—was up at once with outstretched hand.

"Going to the reunion, Colonel?" asked the traveling man.

"Yes, sir," replied the Colonel, his faded blue eyes brightening as he drew back his shoul-

ders, thereby creating at once an impression that good fighting blood still warmed his old veins.

"Well, I hope you will have a time; should like to stop over myself, but I am due in Santone the day after to-morrow. However, I shall have it all from the newspapers; there are wonderful newsmen out here. They scent the item as the Indian did the early settler."

"Then I wish to Heaven that all newsmen had been western pioneers. They are as great a curse to this country as high tariff or the boll weevil," and the Colonel lifted his hat and shook back the iron-gray hair which fell in heavy masses over his brow. The man with the keen gray eyes and the letters to Tokio in his pocket, moved up a seat or two and examined his specimen.

"I know what you would say, sir," continued the Colonel, as he accepted a cigar, "yet, at the same time, I know what I am saying. The day has passed when newspapers employ cultured and responsible men to expound current affairs for their readers. Now, people believe that they, themselves, are qualified to form opinions upon all subjects, provided their maws are filled with what they call the news. The editor—I am speaking, gentlemen, of the editor of the old school—was always willing to meet you halfway. Should you approve his opinions, you usually found it convenient to

tell him so, and—circumstances being propitious—it was also the usual thing to request the honor of his company around the corner, where you endorsed your approval like a man, in three fingers of Old Crow. On the other hand, should you feel aggrieved by his attitude, you had the privilege of a gentleman, and, usually, got the satisfaction you asked." Here the Colonel settled comfortably into a corner seat, and looked upon his auditors with the confident expression of one whose experience had bought wisdom.

"Of two things, sir, you could feel assured: first, that the editor's opinion was his own, and not borrowed from the man in the business office; and next, that he would not leave his defense to the management of his paper. Why," exclaimed the Colonel in tones of genuine admiration, "the editor was the whole thing! In fact, he was all there was of the paper; the city, state, religious, political and social departments rolled into one, and I assure you, the result was a fine, heavyweight fellow. Yes, sir, the old editor knew personally both the saint and the sinner, and it was only the printers under him who could tell which of those two he preferred; it was something his wife and mother were not always able to determine."

How it happened that five tired, bored men found themselves interested within ten minutes of the newcomer's entrance, it would be difficult to tell. Each, however, in his own way, accept-

ed the scene as a prologue to some local comedy which, the war correspondent said to himself, might be worth while.

"Well, on the other hand, Colonel, a good deal could be said for the modern newspaper man," and the traveling man looked over at the man bound for Manchuria.

"That depends upon his lack of opportunities for accomplishing harm," replied the Colonel. "How long do you suppose the War between the States would have lasted if we had had those all-fired meddlers with their note-books galloping after every regiment? I tell you, sir, that the greatest civil war in history would have broken up into a most uncivil row, had not the newspaper correspondents of those days been few in number, and kept well within bounds.

"I want to say, sir," and the old man turned to the Bostonian, as if instinctively feeling that a sympathetic understanding lay in that direction, "I want to say, that I would have been a rich man to-day, had it not been for a news-monger. My dear sirs, among the few things which nature has placed beyond human control, is the man with the news-getting fever in his blood. It is one of the worst forms of insanity."

"Would it be asking too much to have your story?" asked the man with the keen gray eyes. The Colonel turned, and for the first time di-

rectly regarded the war correspondent. It was a glance wherein instinct touched the border of suspicion.

"I hope, sir," he answered with great politeness, "that should you approve the pernicious habit of putting everything into newspapers, you will kindly remember, there are persons still living who do not believe that the noblest piece of work on God's earth, is to 'scoop' the other fellow. That word is not mine, it belongs to my former friend, the newspaper man."

To this point the traveling man felt that he had handled his goods as an expert should, and that the time was now ripe for realization. He opened the brand of cigars which was always reserved for especial occasions—the item which made such a big hole in his expense account—and having done this, he felt that the Colonel's opportunity had passed into his own keeping.

"I was not one of those veterans of the great civil war who was obsessed by the conviction that he could not adapt himself to new conditions; I not only meant to adapt myself to changes, but I meant to profit by them. I simply gave up all intention of trying to resume the old life—I came to Texas instead.

"My first investment after the war was unfortunate. It did not amount to much in cash; it was sheep, sir. The very first winter after I went into the sheep-raising business, the blizzard was the most severe one that western

Texas had seen for fifteen years; the young animals were all frozen on the range. I, however, still had faith in this great state, and was consoled by the reflection that I knew pretty well the localities where money might be made."

Here the Colonel bit off the end of his cigar, and carefully brushed the dust from the front of his coat with a large silk handkerchief. The sun had been moving slowly from the face of the great mogul engine, and was now creeping into the windows on the right-hand side of the smoker. It was a sun peculiar to the springtime in the Texas country; its brightness was wonderful, and its softness was equally so. There was nothing in its quality to which the word dazzling could be applied. It was caressingly warm and seemed to come out of the cloudless sky without fading its blue. No one in the smoker dreamed of objecting to the entrance of the sun, so no one moved his seat, and the Colonel resumed the telling of his story.

"It was in the year of '83, or '84, that I invested in a silver mine; that is, I was associated with seven or eight others in locating a mine and obtaining a charter from the state. This mine was situated—in fact, it is still there—near Carrizo Pass in a spur of the Quitman mountains, and about ninety miles east from El Paso. The surrounding country was wild and barren. It was unsettled by whites, excepting a few ranch people, Americans, Spaniards, and

Mexicans. There was, however, one point of interest near the place, and, I presume, that, too, is still there. It is an old trail hundreds of miles in length, extending from the great hunting grounds of the Northwest through Arizona, New Mexico, and Western Texas, where it crosses the Rio Grande near Carrizo Pass, and goes down into old Mexico. This attenuated trail is about two feet wide. It is really only a groove worn in the rock by the feet of countless Indians who, for numberless years, went south with the drift of the autumn leaves, and who always returned over this same old trail, following the call of the birds in the spring. This ancient path was abandoned, however, some fifty years before our mine was opened; the Indians having made a new one which carried them farther west through the salt plains of San Elizario." The Colonel passed his hand over his eyes, and sat for a moment as if absorbed in the reflection of some particularly regrettable "might have been."

"We had some twenty or thirty miners at work on the grub-stake plan," he continued, "and after a sufficient quantity of ore had been taken from the hole, which was big enough to put a two-story house into, we sent specimens to Indianapolis to be assayed. The report was so satisfactory, that we felt justified in organizing a stock company and obtaining a charter from the state, which entitled us to dig out

ore for a half-century to come. It is only right that I make the statement, that the greater part of our capital went into a half-score of books of the handsomest engraved stock certificates St. Louis could produce."

Whether it was from an inability to understand this disposition of the company's capital, or from the noise made by a passing freight train on a siding, the Bostonian suddenly pushed his black smoking-cap to the back of his head, and placed his hand behind his ear.

"The officers of this company," resumed the Colonel, "had one peculiarity in common—their individual capitals were small, and had been acquired under difficulties. The vice president was a retired army officer, who had served for many years along the Rio Grande, and, of course, normally, had not a cent, while the secretary and treasurer—a newspaper man by the name of McFlyn—also belonged to a profession that acquires wealth only through marriage or a legacy. McFlyn had not married, nor had he been mentioned in a will."

The ex-lieutenant, feeling the reflection cast upon the Service by the Colonel, took issue upon the question of unqualified military impecuniosity, but the man on his way to Manchuria, being older in the service of life, smiled with a genuine appreciation of the assertion regarding newspaper men, and mentally raised the

Colonel a grade in his scale of individual estimation.

"I should say," resumed the Colonel, with a decided show of being fair in his statements, "that McFlyn was considered by the great eastern press to be the ablest man of his profession in the Southwest. I have been told, he could have had any salary he wanted at the telegraph editor's desk, but he always said that nature never intended him for a staff man. He considered himself at his best when mounted upon a pie-bald Pegasus with a free lance in his hand, and the right-of-way through everybody's backyard. Well, all this talent caused him to serve a number of big metropolitan dailies with the most approved, up-to-date nosings into other people's affairs.

"Leaving out the fact that McFlyn's blood was tainted with the frenzy of news-getting, he was, when taken all around," said the Colonel with the impartiality of a true gentleman, "one of the finest fellows I ever knew. He had enough Irish in him to render him utterly unteachable in all matters outside of his own experiences, and—whether right or wrong—he always believed his cause the best in the world.

"No one interested in the silver-mine investment had more need of success in that venture than McFlyn. For a number of years he had been waiting for the day when he should feel justified in marrying without too great an im-

position upon the young lady of his choice. It was not that he was really unwilling to exchange a bachelorhood in Bohemia for matrimony on some quiet street, it was the lady who declined the proposition until the financial basis of the arrangement could be made surer." Here the Colonel laughed softly to himself, as if he enjoyed the recollection of the troubled course of McFlyn's true love.

"When the assayer's report came back to us," he said, resuming the text of his narrative, "we saw that the heavy per cent. of silver in the ore would justify a trip to New York on the part of one of the officers of the Rio Grande Mining and Milling Company. It was decided, after many conferences, that I should take a valiseful of ore and present myself before a certain capitalist in the great metropolis. He was an old acquaintance who had, himself, begun life grub-staking on the Pacific slope. I believe, he is now a gold-standard man." The Colonel struck a match and applied it to the unlighted cigar he still held in his hand. "Those were the days of a free and unlimited coinage of silver," he said slowly, between the puffs of fragrant smoke; and then he fell into a silence which lasted so long that the Bostonian, remembering the books of handsomely engraved stock certificates, asked:

"Did you succeed in placing your stock?"

"Well, really, that is the story," answered

the Colonel. He withdrew his gaze from the undulating sea of green which swept from the smoker's side to the far-away horizon line, and then addressed the Bostonian:

"Although I made that trip to New York not many years ago, yet, sir, the old conception of Texas was still in force. There was a general belief that the main features of physical and intellectual life in the Lone Star state were to be found in the centipede, tarantula, and the cowpuncher. Why, sir," he exclaimed, turning to the traveling man, "you, yourself, may have observed that many easterners believe that the shadow of the Indian may still be found on the plains of Texas, and that the war-whoop has not yet become an echo.

"When I crossed the Mississippi at St. Louis I did not consider it remarkable to be assailed by questions the most ridiculous, caused by exaggerated rumors of the Apaches having left their reservation and gone on the warpath. You may remember that old raid, the result of a revolt of the big chiefs, Geronimo, Joseph, and Colorow?" he asked the news man, who assented, although at that date he was an infant in arms.

"On my arrival in New York," continued the Colonel, "I was most courteously received by my old western acquaintance, now become a capitalist. I submitted my specimens and was assured that I would receive a communication

at the earliest moment after an opinion had been obtained from the experts. Not having visited the great Northern metropolis since 1857, I naturally put up at the old New York Hotel, on lower Broadway, and began seeing the sights in a quiet way. At the end of a week's time I received a most polite note from my capitalist friend, asking that I confer upon him the honor of my presence at a dinner party on the following Tuesday.

"You see, sir," and the Colonel here turned to the Bostonian for justification of an optimism in regard to his mission which might not be apparent to the uninitiated, "it was made clear to me that the report from the ore experts was an enthusiastic one; that the stock could be placed at its face value. I believe, I may truthfully state without vanity, that those five multimillionaires present at that dinner, for that night at least, considered me one of themselves. You see, in those days silver was received into the best society in Wall Street. During the period of coffee and cigars, an appointment was made for the following morning when I should meet at the office of the Highest Financial Mogul, some ten men of wealth. It was intimated that those men would secure an interest in the mine, and there should be enough stock taken to place it on a paying basis at once. Now, I ask you, gentlemen, can you imagine how a man feels who holds within the hollow of his hand

the common interest of those who are a power in the land? You see, it was optional with me how much stock should be taken out of Texas.

"The fact that I had not heard from McFlyn for several days, did not worry me, as I felt assured of our success with the financial end in New York, and knew him to be thoroughly devoted to our interest at home." Here the evening shadows began to fall across the Colonel's worn face where the lingering lights of an earlier day had almost faded. He continued his story, however, with a sigh, which impressed his auditors as a note of impending woe.

"As I was anxious to show my business habits in the smallest particular, I was on hand the next morning promptly at the hour named the evening before. The Highest Financial Mogul received me kindly, but not in a manner that would indicate I had been especially expected, or that he expected any one else. For a few minutes we conversed upon indifferent topics. I was trying to decide in my mind just how much stock we should reserve in Texas when he asked if I expected to return home at once, and in that event, what I proposed doing. Seeing my look of astonishment, he exclaimed: 'Why, you don't mean to tell me you expect the matter of the mining stock to go farther after the character of telegrams printed in the morning papers!'

"As I had not seen the morning papers, I begged that he would explain. In reply, he handed me a newspaper which contained a special telegram from its correspondent, bearing a Texas date-line, and over which was conspicuously displayed a tremendous scarehead.

"Gentlemen," the Colonel said, solemnly producing an old pocketbook and taking from it a worn piece of newspaper, "I keep this scrap of paper, not as an evil reminder, nor as a curious human document, but as a bracer to a righteous intention—that is, never to permit McFlyn to speak to me again."

The Colonel unfolded the creased and ragged clipping which he handed to the man bound for Manchuria, and who, upon glancing over it, informed his companions that it was only necessary to master the sense of the scarehead, as the whole story lay therein. The Colonel made a slight bow towards the war correspondent, who read aloud the following startling statements:

OVER THE OLD TRAIL!

Apache Indians Once More On the Ancient Warpath!

UNUSED FOR FIFTY YEARS!

United States Troops in Close Pursuit of the Savages!

THE LAY OF THE LAND

ALARM ON THE FRONTIER!

Thousands of Red Warriors Fleeing Through Texas to Mexico.

SILVER MINES ABANDONED.

Miners of the Carrizo and Rio Grande Company Run Away for Safety!

A CLOSE CALL FOR SCALPS!

The Hostile Apaches Pass Through the Mining Camp—Hair-Raising Panic Among the Fortune Hunters—No More Work in the Silver Ore Shafts!

While this clipping was being read the Colonel sat apparently absorbed in the wide stretch of country without. The expanse of prairie was now broken by an occasional line of bois d'arc trees, the first outposts of the Trinity valley. When he turned to conclude his narrative, his eyes were moist.

"This was not only McFlyn's work," he said in a low tone, "but, gentlemen, he had the infernal audacity to sign that telegram with his full name. My New York acquaintance informed me that there was a general impression among those concerned in the investment, that

things at the mine must be in a devil of a fix, or the secretary and treasurer of the company would not have sent out such a warning. You see, sir," and he turned once again to the Bostonian, "that capitalist had a fragment of a New England conscience, and it was useless to try to convince him that McFlyn acted without a conscience of any kind when he sent out that telegram; that the descendant of Irish kings had wrecked the best opportunity of his own life for the sake of a good 'special,' the money value of which was, probably, less than ten dollars. You see, there was no news-getting frenzy in the blood of the Mayflower outfit.

"I came back to Texas hoping to find our secretary a wiser if a sadder man, but what do you think, sir? I found him particularly elated from having 'scooped' the St. Louis newspapers."

"What did you say to the Crown Prince of Erin?" asked the traveling man.

"You see, nothing could be done with him short of personal violence, for he was in Texas, and from force of habit he had kept well within the libel law. Although the Indians had merely passed the mine without disturbing anything, and the miners had successfully hidden in the smaller prospecting holes, yet our mine venture was as utterly a thing of the past as the ore-getting enterprises of King Solomon.

"Really, gentlemen, the most effective thing

I could think of at the time, was to refuse to shake hands with McFlyn, and to tell him that whatever his value as a newspaper man, as a mining financier he wasn't worth his room in Hades."

At this point in the story the train pulled into the station at Dallas, and the Colonel, bidding his companions good-by, hastened to join the ex-Confederates who were clustered on the platform awaiting reinforcements of their old comrades for the reunion. As the smoker moved off towards Fort Worth, the traveling man exclaimed:

"There's McFlyn, now!" and the growing distance left a faint impression of the Colonel shaking the arm off of an equally enthusiastic man.

"Such incompetent meddlers should be incarcerated instead of being made secretaries and treasurers of stock companies," remarked the Bostonian.

"Ah, but it was a great story!" exclaimed the newspaper man bound for Manchuria.

BELOW THE SALT

BELOW THE SALT

I

He was an exponent of one of the many extremes into which modern civilization has developed; a kind of sterilized substance from which nothing spontaneous could be hoped. There was nothing of the flint about his hardness, however, for his unresponsiveness made impossible the spark from which the anarchist's torch is kindled, or the small clear flame by which magna chartas are written.

He was a man whose finely tempered brain had cut an ascending path from the rank and file of the people, and whose achievements had given him not only riches, but a fine contempt for the failures of others. He had always been considered a gentleman, and his father had been called an honest man, yet having no pedigree beyond the one of ordinary descent, it was but natural that he lacked faith in the influence of heredity.

Nevertheless, his Puritan ancestors had bequeathed him qualities which made it possible for him to become what he was. The old tree had been so grafted upon by the many who had

gone before, that their strongest virtues had helped to make his most pronounced faults. The merciless tenacity of his progenitors—which sprang from and was kept alive by religious fervor—had in him gradually grown into a dauntless and determined purpose, the refinement of which did not require holy zeal to keep it alive. This man, in following a temperamental development, had severed himself from the orthodox creed of his people, and in turning from all beliefs based upon faith, he felt that common sense in his person had triumphed over superstition. Believing himself afloat upon a sea of realities, he trusted not at all to those unexplained influences which many men admit, yet do not understand, and was strong in his conviction that he was beyond the possibilities of an unaccountable experience.

II

A significant group of men sat talking in a private office in a well-known building in a well-known city. The tariff, the currency, the prospective presidential nominations, the necessity for incorporation in modern business enterprises, and the policy of refusing to renew land mortgages in certain sections of the country, were the principal topics discussed. It might easily have been seen that the component parts of this group were interested politicians and

financial wire-pullers, monopolists along the hard lines which lead to the stupendous successes of modern life.

One man sat in an unbroken, characteristic silence, a habit usually fraught with greater disastrous results to his fellow-citizens in general, than were the more emphatic outbursts of his bondholding neighbor. His power was widespread, and he held in the hollow of his hand the interests of thousands of people. Some one of the group incidentally suggested the advisability of putting into immediate operation a policy that had been long under consideration by this small but powerful syndicate—the foreclosing of all matured mortgages held over agricultural land in the extreme South. This was in the second decade following the War between the States.

The silent man moved forward in his chair with the intention of giving his sanction to this movement, when his eyes rested for a moment upon the opposite wall, and the slight animation that had arisen to his face died out; he resumed his former position and sat, apparently, lost in thought. He was, in fact, having a novel experience; the sensation creeping over him was outside of the bounds of his every belief, which with him meant the probable.

The familiar wall of the office appeared strangely changed; the part of the room in front of him had seemingly fallen away, and in

its place there stood out suddenly an unfamiliar scene. The fading light concentrating at this point brought out what at first was indistinct into a clear reality, and the observer felt that, in some unaccountable way, he was in touch with a dead and gone time.

A long, low room, dark with its old pictures and time-stained furniture; in the centre was a heavily carved table, and upon which were lying several sheets of paper. The light from the high window, which barely touched the surface of the table, fell with a soft emphasis upon the head and shoulders of a woman. Her face was oval and somewhat pale; the features delicate and the hair fell in soft, silky rings above the brow. The emotionless character of the face was decidedly noticeable, though the fine, firm lines of the mouth gave it a dignity of expression that one oftenest sees as an essential of the high-bred woman. A man stood at the opposite side of the table, his figure in shadow and his dark clothes seemingly absorbed by the glow which lighted the face of his companion. His dress was that of a trooper in Cromwell's guard; severely plain, almost ostentatious in its lack of soldierly ornament, save for the long sword which hung at his side.

A slight movement made by the woman caused the long cloak she wore to fall aside, disclosing a slender figure in a richly embroidered bodice. The modern observer of this

strange scene had an uncomfortable conviction that the moment was ripe with the fullness of a crisis. The man in the picture leaned forward, looking the while into the fathomless depths of the woman's eyes; the man in the chair knew with a strange consciousness that those eyes were gray and held within their depths a wondrous smile which found no reflection upon her lips. The woman slowly lifted one slender hand—there was an oblong seal ring on the third finger—and let it lightly fall. It was a mere pass of the dainty finger tips upon the soldier's arm, yet he quivered from his head to his feet and the tell-tale light ran like a trembling thread of brightness along the narrow scabbard covering the sword at his side. His hand, which also had been lifted, now slowly descended upon the strips of paper lying upon the table, and bending down, he tore them across and threw the pieces behind him, still looking into the woman's eyes. She slowly drew back until she stood erect, and now, for the first time, smiled with her lips—a smile that carried across the superlative beauty of her face the gleam of a supreme derision. Here, the modern observer became conscious of a strange feeling of affinity with the humiliated soldier, but at this point the light went out, and the remarkable posthumous testimony of some long-gone romance went with it.

The man who witnessed this scene from a

lost drama while sitting in his office, satisfied common sense by relegating the experience to the category of dreams, and immediately thereafter hurried uptown in order to keep a dinner engagement.

III

A man of modern finance left his far-reaching schemes and reluctantly went into the midst of much that his nature most abhorred—the oligarchical element of the old South. It was true that his presence amid the fragments of an old social condition was justified unto himself by a business necessity, for he was one of a syndicate of capitalists that held mortgages over large tracts of agricultural lands in the far South, the original titles to some of which bore the signature of England's second George. The man of finance soon found himself engaged in a conflict with the only foe he really considered worthy of his steel, that was, his own will, re-enforced by his own judgment. In this instance the conflict was strangely complicated, for the first time in his experience, by an inexplicable fascination of a woman who was giving up to him her ancestral acres with the resistance of a hero, and the submission of an uncrowned queen.

IV

The autumn sunset fell through the small window-panes into the long, low room, where it touched softly here and there some old picture in its tarnished frame. The fire in the great open chimney-place burned with a subdued glow until, the back-log falling apart, it sent out a grand heart of flame that threw a tender effulgence over the portrait of a woman which hung above the mantel.

The man had been told a pretty little legend of the original of this portrait, whose charm had conquered the iron heart of one of Cromwell's soldiers, and had thereby saved her ancestral home and preserved its revenues for the service of the gracious and graceless Charles. Had she married him? the man asked the descendant of this Tory progenitress. Of course not! The trooper had received far more than he should have hoped for—the gift of a smile.

This woman of that other time had been her ancestress—a daughter of a courtier of the time of Charles I.—whose birth had placed her above the honest love of a Roundhead soldier who sat below the salt. Those two, then, were the progenitors of the two great religious and social forces of the succeeding centuries, the forces which have yet to see the survival of the fittest.

The man looked for an instant into the fair proud face of the woman before him, and then down at the paper-strewn table which stood between them. With a feeling that is common to all sorts and conditions of men, he arose from his chair and unhesitatingly extended his hand; she also arose and stood by the old carved table, her figure slightly inclined forward. He looked down and met the smile in the earnest gray eyes, and with a wonderfully transfiguring light upon his face, he leaned across the table with his hand still extended, but between them yet lay the sheets of legal paper. Slowly he gathered these together, and slowly he tore them across, tossing the pieces behind him. She drew back; there was no surprise, only a gentle dignity which was half an acceptance.

When, finally, he stood with her hand in his and found her inclined to laugh at his melodramatic proceeding, he told her that amid the joy of the moment he was impressed by two convictions, namely: the development and improvement in the management of natural inclination under modern conditions, and—

"Well?" she asked.

"That after more than two centuries," he slowly replied, "my ancestor is avenged."

A PREMATURE FACT

A PREMATURE FACT

I

When one has a remarkable story to relate, and the solution of which must rest with science or superstition, a straightforward statement seems best, leaving its acceptance to the liberality, or credulity, of the reader.

I have had the unusual fortune of becoming involved in a series of exceptional experiences, and I have endeavored to resist the mental cowardice that inclined me to the easier, if less satisfactory, position of considering myself a victim of delusions, or illusions. I have preferred to believe my experience exceptional only, holding that physical science covers much that is superficially accounted psychic phenomena, and which our limitations have labeled supernatural.

For many years my life has been devoted to the study of natural philosophy and physics, therefore my interest was deeply stirred by the recognition of what is designated the X-ray, and by a belief that Reason—which has learned to be a patient waiter upon Science, and which is ever ready to assist in making clearer the "laws

of approach''—was about to be rewarded for her loyalty. The general public, apparently, did not realize that a far greater fact had been attained by science when it became possible to see through a dense body, than when it became able to project sound through space. At first it did not occur to the finite perception that this discovery might hold within its grasp the key to many mysteries; that through its agency a reconciliation might be effected between the seemingly improbable and the exactions of reason; that, in a word, the invisible might become visible when assisted by the higher power of a natural law.

II

The morning was cloudy and damp, but at noon the streets were swept by one of those cold rains well known to the dwellers in Gotham. I had turned from the Avenue into a cross street, intending to take a surface car and thereby avoid a long walk in the rain to an L station. I had reached a point where my car should pass when I was forced by the storm to take refuge in the doorway of a small shop. I closed my umbrella and proceeded to look about me after the way of a man who is not in a hurry.

At my right was a cheap showcase in which were displayed a dozen or more autograph letters and a half dozen old books. There were

the first two volumes of "The History of South Carolina", by Dr. David Ramsey, of Revolutionary fame, and thrown into their intimate companionship was a shabby little volume of Mary Shelley's "French Authors", with its back gone. There was also a small sign suspended within the case which bore the legend: "Single Volumes from Private Libraries, a Specialty."

The inspection of the small showcase caused me to lose one passing car, and as I raised my umbrella to make a dash for the crossing at the corner, another glance at the case furnished the temptation I seldom try to resist; I turned and entered the shop. It was a small place where second-hand books and old autograph letters could be purchased at reasonable prices. Its presiding genius was a middle-aged woman, upon whose face there was an expression of gentle dignity.

"I missed my car by looking into your showcase outside," I explained, with a watery smile.

"I fear," she answered, "I have nothing here that would attract the attention of a collector; the kind of purchaser who invests in valuable editions for speculative purposes. I manage, however, to pick up something which a modest booklover of moderate means might value."

I remember what she said—the proprietor of the old bookshop—as afterwards it was inter-

esting to recall that chance alone assisted in the selection of the book I purchased that evening. I stood turning over the several volumes which lay upon the counter, when the woman of the shop struck a match against the edge of a shelf and applied the flame to a gas burner above my head.

"Those are a part of a recent purchase," she remarked, indicating by an inclination of her head the books in front of me.

I glanced through the glass door, only to see another car going my way, and then turned to the half dozen books which lay beneath my hand. There was Gilbert A'Beckett's "Comic History of England", illustrated by John Leech of the London Punch; one bound collection of Boydell's Plates, and a copy of Addison's "Campaign". This latter volume was small and must have had an individual binding; probably it had been intended for a present when Dick Steel and his friend Joseph Addison furnished the fashionable reading for the Beatrix Esmonds of the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Influenced by its peculiar binding, I finally made this book my choice, and having placed my purchase securely beneath my raincoat, went out into the storm.

Within my small sitting room twilight had fallen, while far down in the street the arc light, when seen through the sheets of rain, looked as uncertain and spectral as the intermittent rays

from a revolving lantern on a winter coast. I removed my damp clothing and prepared to enjoy a half hour before dinner in the examination of my recent purchase. I am always particularly minute in my inspection of an old book when it first comes into my possession. There are minor qualities which are of as much interest as the date of publication, or the art work on the cover. My newly acquired Addison was in a binding of crimson leather with a shallow pocket on the inside of the cover. Across the face-page was written the somewhat singular name—"Infelice," and the date was 1710.

"Ah, here is a find!" I exclaimed, drawing from the pocket a folded paper, the durable texture of which placed its make in the early days of the eighteenth century. I eagerly unfolded the paper, only to meet with a disappointment. I had suspected some document, some exclusive scrap of inside history, while in its stead there lay in my hand a piece of parchment upon which was a portrait of a woman done in miniature. The shadows in my room were deepening rapidly; I drew the curtains and touched the switch which flooded the room in light.

Instantly, the picture in my hand flashed into a wonderful distinctness with its soft lines and depths of coloring. The face was oval and fair, rather after the sixteenth century model than a copy of the robust, flesh-and-blood woman of the days of Queen Anne. If the original

of that portrait was of the genuine English type of her class of that day, it has greatly changed since the coming over of the Hanoverian kings. The eyes were hazel in color; there was a slight lowering of the lids—a veiling of the expression to a point where its meaning was a fascinating suggestion. The hair was of that indescribable auburn of many shades—something like the autumn foliage after the insistent reds have gone and the golds have begun to sink into browns—while here and there were points of light which had been caught and held through nearly two centuries. The dress was regal in color and fashion; a robe of crimson velvet cut low at the throat, around which was a string of pearls worth a king's ransom.

I suddenly remembered an old conviction of mine: that certain physical types of woman are alone capable of certain mental and moral attitudes. As I examined the miniatured face, I recalled the immense nervous force usually possessed by the intense, tawny-haired woman. Such, assuredly, was Jael, the executioner of the Kenite; and Judith, the slayer of Holofernes. What strange fancies occasionally beset one! There—I had almost constructed a criminal history for the woman whose pictured face had come into my possession in so unusual a way, and after the weight of nearly two hundred years had probably obliterated her memory from the records of men.

While such thoughts ran through my head, I unconsciously reversed the picture and saw written across the little oval, the following words: "I return this Portrait with the Volume sent me into France; a Woman without Honour hath no value—Francis Desmond." Amazement gave place to amusement, for the very absurdity of the inscription branded it a forgery, or—a joke.

Francis Desmond was my one particular friend, and a more chivalrous man did not live; a disrespect from him to a woman was beyond his capability, and yet—the handwriting was identical, excepting where the peculiarities of an older style of chirography were evident. Then—written in slender, upright characters along the face of the dull, opaque paper in which the picture was enclosed, was this line: "The day must come when this Iniquity shall be wiped out!" Dear, dear, what extravagant heroics!

The Reverend Francis Desmond, of St. Marks —a small church in an old coast town to the southward—was one of those rare characters the world occasionally fosters in order to demonstrate the grand capabilities of human nature. I knew him in his boyhood and during those years when the elemental feelings are the strongest, and when the time came, and the young man with a conscience was brought face to face with the obligations imposed by his own

existence, Francis Desmond embraced the most inspiring of creeds—a belief in a continual growth of good in man. I do not know that he ever formulated this intuitive belief into words and repeated them as he did the accepted expression of the Apostles' Creed; I do know, however, that he maintained a conviction—one that often comes to the humblest man who endeavors to live righteously—that, in a sense, we are better than our ancestors. He used to say that the humanitarian germ should account for something in its unhesitating development.

Desmond and I were together at the University; he followed the straight and narrow path of professional divinity—a short cut which rapidly led within the portals of a church—while I went afield, taking a longer route over the less frequented trails of natural science. One of the strongest ties that bound our friendship was the consciousness that each was striving to attain the same conclusion.

III

I did not place the old volume of Addison in my bookcase, nor did I leave it on my reading table, but, influenced by an unconscious impulse, I carried it into my bedroom and placed it in my trunk. After dinner I procured an evening paper, and returned to my apartment at the top of the building. While in the act of entering,

I paused with my hand on the door, for I had locked it on going out, and now it was partly open. On looking down the narrow hall I saw a slender line of light defining one side of my sitting-room door, and I remembered that I had turned off all lights.

I went cautiously down the hall, braced for an encounter with some person who had no right to be beyond my locked door, but on entering my room, however, I felt something of a shock when I found myself confronted by the kindest face I knew—that of my friend, Francis Desmond. He was standing in the centre of the room, a smile upon his lips and an eager, expectant look in his eyes. He came towards me in the old boyish fashion, both hands outstretched.

"Only a moment, old man, only a moment and I am off," he exclaimed. "I came in yesterday at noon, and leave to-night. I came for sister; I have persuaded her to be with me for a week or two. As my reason for coming is a very especial one, and as I mean to have your blessing too, I induced your janitor to let me in here."

He told me without further preliminary that he was going to be married, and that the date of that interesting event was the twenty-second of December; it was then about the twentieth of November. To me, the news was almost as much of a shock as if he had come to tell me

that he had committed a forgery. Why I should have endowed him with my own sentiments in regard to the state of single-blessedness, I know not.

It is a matter of small moment how much of a celibate a man may be by inclination, he never gets the credit for it, owing, no doubt, to the one unexplained fact that he must always have something to love. It would appear that from this established fact, the unknown quantity must be evolved, yet it is only the shallow-minded who persist in believing that this quantity is necessarily a woman. If a man is enough of a philosopher to resist the influence of a certain kind of sentiment, he will see that woman is only infrequently a happy adjunct to the life of man.

I did not, however, say this to Francis, as I sat and listened to his love story. It was unnecessary to ask if all were well with him, for his judgment had only recently come upon him, and he had attained his heaven within the dominion of a woman who seemed to be an absolute monarch.

Well, well! I lose all patience in thinking over this part of Francis Desmond's story. What was the use of a man having been both wise and good if in the supreme crisis of his own life he failed to use either wisdom or goodness in his own behalf!

As my friend was about to leave me, he hesi-

tated for a moment while putting his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat, and then said almost shyly, "I have something to show you." I knew even then that this "something" was not an afterthought, but the chief object of his visit; for all that he had told me could have been confided by letter.

He drew a small miniature case from somewhere near his heart, and handed it to me. I carried it to my reading table and turned on the drop-light. At first, there was some difficulty with the spring by which the little case opened; at the second attempt, it yielded to the pressure with a suddenness that caused me to start and utter a half-smothered exclamation, for—without an idea of a possibility of such a thing—I found myself looking into the same face that reposed at that moment within the covers of the old Addison in my trunk. The identity was unquestionable; every line, every tint, was there, although the expressions differed, and I saw that I had the better picture of the two.

Francis' miniature presented the face of a woman of about twenty-five years of age, and a fine specimen of the Jael-Judith type I have mentioned, but without a trace of the exaltation which usually accompanies the accomplishment of a heroic purpose. In plain truth, the face lacked softness, and the lover had not perceived it. The figure—a three-quarter length—

was gowned in some transparent, white material of current fashion.

In order to make clear to myself that Francis Desmond's fiancée had at some time masqueraded in a crimson velvet gown, I remarked as I returned the miniature: "Infelice is rather a singular name."

"I don't know," he replied absently, still regarding the miniature in his hand.

"Do you know any one bearing that name?" I asked, trying to appear as indifferent to the answer as he, apparently, was to the question.

For a moment he considered, and then said slowly, as one who was making an honest effort to recall something that had escaped him, yet the echo of which his memory retained:

"No; I am sure I have never known any one of that name; is it not a word that has been used with a peculiar significance? It seems," he continued, still slowly and reflectively, "that I have seen the word written rather than heard it spoken; that there is some disagreeable association connected with it, yet I cannot recall the circumstances."

He drew up his head and threw back his shoulders, conveying a kind of intimation that he was not interested in a mere incident that lay dormant in his memory when every hour was claimed by thoughts and feelings of a vital intenseness. He returned the miniature to his pocket and said good-by, with the promise that

I should be the first to hear from him after the consummation of his hopes. I let him go with his confidence intact, but I silently determined that the explanation I sought, the future should give.

IV

The evening of December twenty-second was still and cold; the mist which comes up from the sea during a moderating spell had descended to the pavements in a palpable drizzle, but at the fag end of the day, through a drop in the thermometer, everything suddenly became crystal clear and beautifully white. At six o'clock I went out to keep an appointment at the home of an eminent scientist who had recently returned from Europe. On my way uptown I recalled the fact that the twenty-second was the date of Francis Desmond's wedding, and suffered keen regret that I had allowed my interest in the approaching visit to obliterate from my memory an intention to send him a telegram. I knew, however, that he who always did the right thing, would not fail to let me hear immediately after the happy event. In spite of this conviction, I arrived at my destination somewhat shaken by my oversight. A servant conducted me at once to the laboratory on the fourth floor, where I was ushered into the presence of my host and three other men

whose names are well known to readers of certain periodicals devoted to electrical science. As I entered, I felt the undercurrent of excitement which usually attends an experiment of a novel character. The feature of that evening was a test of the then comparatively newly discovered X-ray; an attempt to photograph upon an especially prepared plate any object invisible to the natural eye, yet which might be held by the surrounding ether in the manner that a foreign substance may be indiscernibly embedded in flesh or wood.

This experiment had scarcely begun, when in the darkened room there appeared a soft glow, apparently distinct from the light emitted by the ray. At first it was nebulous, and then it brightened until it absorbed everything it touched. For a second there was a tremulous uncertainty, and then a strange thrill of anticipation preluded the most remarkable experience of my life—before me stood Francis Desmond and his bride.

Now that she was out of the picture, I could see that she was tall and slender. The soft outline of her white gown was lost in the outer edges of light, and as she turned to the man beside her she seemed to fascinate him with the witchery of her smile. I do not believe that I thought it unnatural for Desmond to be there, for I realized only what my eyes looked upon. He drew nearer to her, and there was upon his

face a wondrous expression of mingled deference and love.

Suddenly—the serenity of the picture was disturbed; the woman's gown assumed a hue of deep crimson and hung from her graceful form in heavy folds, her hair caught glints of the light which now burned with a steady glow, and —my parchment picture stood before me. There was a correspondent change in Francis; had I not every feature of his in my mind to reassure me, I should not have known him. The great curled wig, the embroidered satin clothes and the slender rapier at his side, completed the reproduction of a courtier of the reign of Queen Anne. His face lost the mild, familiar expression which had always been so great a part of my Francis Desmond's charm, and in its stead there spread a cloud of hatred and contempt.

The woman—the woman he so loved—now turned upon him in a fury of long-suppressed passion. She raised her small jewelled hand, which instantly descended like a flash of light that was separated from the surrounding glow by its own vivid intensity. I closed my eyes, overwhelmed by a sudden conviction that, in the contact of two great, opposing forces, it is not always the fittest that survives. I raised my head and gathered courage to look at what I believed to be the last act in some carefully evolved moral tragedy, and I felt the force of

the climax as a blow—Francis Desmond lay lifeless at the woman's feet.

As to the proposed test of that night, I remember, that so far as my companions were concerned, the experiment was pronounced a failure; they had only a blurred plate for their pains.

I was not shocked, I was not even surprised, when on the following morning a special messenger brought me a telegram from Miss Desmond informing me that her brother had died the night of his marriage. Afterwards I learned that the death occurred at the hour of my X-ray experiment, and that an autopsy disclosed a clot of blood on the brain.

V

After Miss Desmond's return to the city I went to see her, and took with me the little picture from the pocket in the lining of the old Addison. She seemed almost as much distressed over the fact that the young widow had not recovered from the shock sustained on that wedding night, as she did over the greater tragedy, the loss of her brother; reluctantly she admitted that the poor girl's mind was gradually going, dissolving, as it were, into a blank. I asked Miss Desmond a few questions concerning the family into which her brother had married. She gave me to understand, with a dis-

tinct show of pride, that her sister-in-law's ancestors had settled in a Southern colony about the middle of the eighteenth century, and—to put it briefly—young Mrs. Desmond did not come of "new people."

Miss Desmond knew nothing of the personal possessions of the family, only, there were some fine old portraits and a wonderful library of eighteenth century editions. No, the family was not in affluence; yes, she had heard Mrs. Desmond's father say that he had disposed of some books to a dealer in Charleston. He had mentioned that fact when showing her his library, and had spoken of the books as the most valuable possession left to the family.

I will not deny that a tremor of excitement thrilled me when I produced my little parchment picture and asked her if she considered it a good likeness of her brother's widow. Miss Desmond adjusted her glasses and looked intently at the miniature, commenting upon the richness of its coloring before she replied:

"Yes, it is a fair likeness of her, but a very much better one of her great-great-grandmother, if I may trust my recollection of a small oval portrait which hangs in the library."

Miss Desmond, believing that the picture had been given me by Francis, grew more confidential, and brought to the surface several fragments of long-buried local gossip in regard to the distinctions of early members of young

Mrs. Desmond's family. This good lady, like many another good lady, related, with pride, gossip concerning an older generation, which would have shocked her dear innocent mind if a hint of such conduct had involved one of her own acquaintances. The chief point of interest seemed to be, that the ancestors of Francis Desmond's wife owed their settlement in America to an effort to escape, or live down, the social consequences of an act of a daughter of their house.

I mention this bit of gossip, not to demonstrate Miss Desmond's idea of one of the distinctions permissible to colonial prominence, but because it afterwards influenced my decision to put to the test a theory based upon the one piece of tangible evidence in my possession —the little picture in the lining of the old Addison. This local tradition, together with the death of my friend on the night of his marriage, would assist me, I believed, to a working hypothesis.

In the summer following Francis Desmond's death, his widow passed away, and it was then that I determined to visit England in an endeavor to fathom one of the most remarkable incidents of the century, as well as to confirm my faith in the existence of those slowly disclosing natural laws which may be classed with what is popularly called supernatural, yet which have always been within our limitations.

VI

I had little difficulty in locating the family; the male line still occupies the ancestral seat. Its present head is prominent in the political affairs of his country, knowing little of the Americanized branch of the family tree.

"Here is the member of our family who had the distinction of causing the great split which eventually exiled a lot of us beyond the seas, and in consequence, created the American line of the house," said my light-hearted host, pausing before a full-length portrait in an out-of-the-way corner of the family picture gallery.

"They say, that she was all 'the go' in the old days, and I believe she gave the old folks some trouble in her time. As for me, I never have been able to account for the attractiveness of the red-haired woman. I know little of this one, however, and as she is considered the progenitress of our American cousins about whom you are inquiring, you may care to go over the papers relating to that part of the family. I have not examined them, although my late father preserved them as if they were of some interest."

I had been introduced to my host by a mutual friend, and found him not only a man of high standing, but an ideal custodian of the data of which I was in search. He was good natured, unaffected, and perfectly indifferent to the sub-

ject of my inquiries, therefore, he lacked the distrust which might have met my persistence.

I looked up at the picture I had come so far to see, for I felt sure that I would find it here, the original of the small copy in the old volume of Addison. It proved to be a painting of singularly fine coloring, one of Sir Godfrey Kneller's best works, and it was not until I stood in front of that portrait that I realized the beauty and grace of the woman.

The figure was regal in its crimson velvet gown. The straight white throat, encircled by a rope of pearls, held erect the head surmounted by its superb crown of burnished copper, and it was then that I saw the charm of that which my eyes had rested upon—the living woman enveloped in the light of the X-ray. The wonder was not of the love of James III., so-called Pretender, but of the strength of the other man who had withstood her until his own development made it impossible for him to fear.

The recorded facts are about as follows: A certain Francis Desmond, a scion of a noble house in the reign of Queen Anne, went into France with the Pretender, and upon their coming again into England, was despoiled of his sweetheart by that Prince. The records show that the woman, a patrician, when deserted by her royal lover, followed the old love into Flanders, there to meet his scorn, and there to be-

gin to live in her hatred and for her revenge.

It is clear to me that my friend, the Francis Desmond of nineteenth century America, was the better part of the man who had borne the same name in the reign of Queen Anne. He had worked upward from the wicked state of those gambling, fighting days of the last Stuarts, and presented in another century the fine fruits of noble endeavor and good impulses. While on the other hand, the woman of his love and scorn became the spirit of revenge, which in time developed the evil genius of her retrogression.

That she finally accomplished her purpose, I have never doubted; overcoming in some inscrutable way the conditions which make possible the survival of the fittest, and in the end developed a controlling force which men call fate. As for Francis Desmond, he suffered the effects of a cause which lay far behind him in another century.

That science should have permitted me to see the supreme act in the tragedy—the climax of the slowly evolved forces of nearly two hundred years—will remain a mystery until thought transference and the possibilities of the ultra rays are better understood. What power continually fed the stronger force of the two until chance, accident, or an unrecognized law found a medium of transmission, I do not pretend to explain, yet what I saw was neither

supernatural nor a figment of my imagination, I most implicitly believe. To me, however, it seems more reasonable to accept the scene I witnessed as a demonstration of a wonderful power of the unexplained ray, that time and science will make clearer; to believe, that for one brief moment it penetrated the molecules of the atmosphere as it would have pierced flesh or wood, and in a twinkling of an eye, the actual, yet invisible, became visible. To our present limitations this revelation may be best accepted as the culmination of a slowly evolved moral tragedy which reached its climax through contact of the dynamic powers possessed by the two elemental forces—those of good and evil.

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